

**SEMANTIC SHIFT IN LUMARAMA: A LEXICAL
PRAGMATICS APPROACH**

BY

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DECLARATION

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

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DR. ALICE WACHIRA

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my dear husband Fidelius Magero, for his support and inspiration. He took care of all my needs and supported me morally and materially. My children, Precious and Pavel had to go through hardships in my absence. You are the reason for my struggle to excel.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank God for the gift of life he has given me throughout the period taken in carrying out this study. He has kept me healthy and extended his healing hand in times of sickness. God has taken care of my entire family both in my presence and absence.

My parents played a very important role in setting the academic foundation in my life. They struggled to educate me and ensure that education had a positive impact in my life. They would always emphasize the importance of education for a bright future. I thank them so much because without their initiative to provide basic education to me, I would not have come this far.

I am greatly indebted to Mr. Were Munyasa, the old man who made an impact to this study by giving me the data that I required. Apart from the information I collected from him, I also learnt more from his contributions. I thank my grandmother Florida, for her contribution and correction especially in the correct pronunciation of words.

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It is worth mentioning that my siblings contributed to the success of this study through their encouragement and prayers. They gave me the support I needed and even offered to take care of my children at times when I was stranded.

ABSTRACT

This study is meant to analyze the semantic shifts in the Lumarama dialect of Luhya language, based on the lexical pragmatic approach. The study focuses on the types of semantic changes involved in determining the meaning of words in Lumarama.

Chapter one provides an introduction to the study. Here the background information to the study is provided through a brief definition of semantic shift as the main concern for the research. The background to the language being studied is given in the chapter. In the same chapter, information on the statement of the problem has been presented, explaining why it is important to study the semantic shifts in Lumarama. The rationale of the investigation is given in addition to stating the scope and limitations of the study. Theoretical framework is looked at in details, alluding to a number of proponents.

The lexical pragmatic theory forms the foundation of the study and its two sub-theories have been used; lexical semantics and conversational implicatures. The literature review is discussed in two ways: literature based on the study and the theoretical literature. Lastly, research methodology is presented in terms when and where the information was collected from and the methods used in collecting the information.

The different types of semantic shifts involved in Lumarama are discussed in chapter two. There are two major types of semantic shifts analyzed through definitions and examples of utterances containing words which have been affected by a shift in their meaning. The discussion is done in relation to the pragmatic processes which result in the shift in the meaning of the affected words.

In chapter three, the effects of semantic shifts in Lumarama are analyzed. In the analysis, attention is given to the advantages and disadvantages that Lumarama as a dialect has faced due to the semantic changes.

Chapter four has the analysis of the data that had been collected. The data collection included oral interviews, recordings from vernacular radio stations and the researcher, who by virtue of being a native speaker of the dialect, possesses native speaker competence.

The summary of the study is given in chapter five. The findings which come up as a result of the research are discussed before the conclusions and recommendations. Therefore, socio-cultural forces which allow people to come in contact under different circumstances, contribute to the shift in meaning of words in a language. The study also looks at the extent to which the Lumarama dialect has been affected by the changes which have occurred in the meanings of its lexemes.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter encompasses the essential details of the study. Here, background information on the language being studied is given. There is a brief history of Lumarama, a dialect of the Luhya language under study. Facts are given on where the speakers of the language are geographically found in Kenya.

In this chapter, the statement of the problem is presented. The ambiguity which occurs as a result of semantic shifts in Lumarama lexemes triggered the decision to study semantic shifts in the language. The study gives a descriptive analysis of the mentioned semantic shifts using the lexical pragmatic approach, which has the view that meanings of words are examined and explained according to particular contexts.

The objectives to the study are stated in line with the hypotheses in this chapter. The rationale, together with the scope and limitations for the study, are discussed. There will be a detailed account of the theoretical framework used in the study, that is, the lexical pragmatic theory which was propounded by Blumstein Reinhard in 1990 and later developed by Wilson in 2003 in his Lectures at Harvard University.

Chapter one will give an insight into the different types of lexical pragmatic processes. The literature review looks at what writers like Bloomfield(1933), Ullmann(1957,1962) and Wambugu (2010) among others have written in relation to semantic shift in a language. During the study, data was collected through interviews and listening to local radio stations. The

researcher's native speaker's competence was helpful in analyzing the data. The chapter ends with the significance of the study.

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE LANGUAGE

Lumarama is a dialect of the larger conglomeration of dialects, which constitute the Luhya language. Luhya is a Bantu language which is spoken in Western Kenya. The language constitutes several dialects, though some of them are not closer to each other than they are to their neighboring non-Luhya speakers. Speakers of Lumarama are called Abamarama. The Abamarama live in Butere District of Western Kenya. Their major town is Butere, which is a significant trading centre in Kakamega County.

The Abamarama are a kin to the Abawanga. The largest clan in Marama is that of the Abamukhula. The founder of this clan bet with another on the question of which of them had so much milk from his cows that it would flow from the top of the ridge to the valley below. They put the matter to test, but the founder of the Abamukhula was a little tricky. He mixed his milk with water and so it did flow down the valley and he won the bet. That is why his followers got the name Abamukhula which means 'of the flowing stream' as in a gully after rain (Osogo, 1966:36).

Western province is inhabited by Abaluhya speakers. The word Abaluhya means 'fellow tribesmen'. The Abaluhya tribe consists of seventeen major sub-tribes living in Kenya and four sub-tribes in Uganda. All these sub-tribes are alike in that they have a common background, common customs, and speak the same language, though dialects vary according to locality (Osogo, 1966:7). The term Luhya may also be used to mean 'those who live in Western

Province’, ‘those who speak the same language’ or ‘those who eat the same food’ (Kanyoro, 1983:7)

Luhya is a Bantu language that belongs to the Benue-Congo sub-group of the Niger-Congo language family. It is claimed that the Abaluhya came from Egypt passing through Sudan. They believe that they are descendants of *Were*, meaning ‘God’ who created the first person. The Abaluhya pray to *Were* except the Maragoli, Tiriki, Idakho and Isukha, who pray to *Asai* or *Imungu*. The sub-tribes of the Luhya tribe in Kenya are: Ababukusu, Abawanga, Abamarama, Abashisa (Kisa), Abanyole, Abalogoli, Abatiriki, Abitakho, Abisukha, Abatsotso, Abanyala ba Mayero (Ndombi), Abakabras, Abanyala be buongo, Abasamia, Abakhayo, Abamaraki and Abatachoni. The sub-tribes in Uganda are: Abasamia, Abagwe, Abanyuli and Abagisu (Osogo, 1966:8)

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Ambiguity and communication breakdown often occur when Lumarama speakers converse with each other. This is due to the fact that when words are used over a considerably long period of time, they attain new meanings, which are different from their original meanings. The changes that take place in the meaning of the words so that they take new meanings are called ‘semantic shifts’. The phrase suggests that the meaning has moved or shifted to mean something different from the old known meaning. Words whose meanings have shifted give rise to utterances that are ambiguous resulting in a communication failure among speakers of a language.

The study provides a descriptive analysis of the semantic shifts in the Lumarama dialect using the lexical pragmatic approach. This theory concentrates on the study of meaning change. The

lexical pragmatic approach presents the view that lexical items of a language are analyzed systematically and interpreted according to a particular context. The contextual knowledge allows the hearer to understand that the intended meaning is different from the expressed meaning. By looking at the forces that trigger semantic changes in the language, we are in a position to comprehend why some words in Lumarama have undergone semantic change.

1.3 OBJECTIVES

The study will examine semantic changes in Lumarama with the following objectives:

- i. To study the different types of semantic changes in Lumarama.
- ii. To account for the causes of the changes in the meaning of Lumarama lexemes.
- iii. To discuss the effects of the changes in word meaning.

1.4 HYPOTHESES

- i. Semantic changes in Lumarama are mainly in the area of science and technology and context plays an important role in determining the denoted idea.
- ii. The semantic changes in Lumarama lexemes are caused by socio-cultural forces such as the exposure of Abamarama to other languages, and new scientific ideas.
- iii. The semantic changes in word meaning lead to ambiguity in word or sentence meaning.

1.5 RATIONALE

Lumarama, just like any other language has been influenced by the changes taking place in the meaning of its words. The speakers use the words in their language differently in order to fit into the context at hand. This study aims at finding out whether the lexical pragmatic approach is

adequate in analyzing data that involves words which have undergone semantic shift in Lumarama. This is due to the fact that the lexical pragmatic approach aims at analyzing the meaning of words through context. There is need to study these changes in the meaning of words so as to understand why there is often a breakdown in communication.

1.6 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

The study focuses only on Lumarama as an independent dialect. It looks at how words change their meaning depending on the context of use and also determines whether the lexical pragmatic theory can be used adequately to analyze the affected Lumarama lexemes. The study is synchronic and descriptive in nature, providing a systematic and explanatory account of the lexical items in question. This is a study that strictly deals with the semantic changes that affect Lumarama dialect using the lexical pragmatic approach.

1.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The lexical pragmatic approach has been adopted. The theory was propounded by Blumstein (1990) in his publication in 'The Journal of Semantics'. It was later developed by Wilson (2003) in his lectures at Harvard University. The model analyses meaning through the context and is therefore effective in the representation of concepts.

This theory focuses on the study of meaning change. The lexical pragmatic approach presents the view that lexical items of a language are analyzed systematically and interpreted according to a particular context.

The contribution of semantics to the overall interpretation of an utterance is more restricted than it was originally thought. Lexical pragmatics tries to account for pragmatic phenomena that are connected with the semantic under specification of lexical items.

1.7.1 REPRESENTATION OF CONCEPTS

Concepts are mental representations which can be acquired and lost. The mental representations act as an input to mentally represented inference. The objects that are normally reflected upon when reading a word are seen as our perception of the words. The objects with which we are doing this reflection are the concepts that we have of the word at hand (Murphy, 2003:23)

Murphy argues that the ways we use words are quite different from our beliefs about how the words are used. For example:

The most common meaning of the word 'run' involves movement by foot but another meaning is 'manage'. This indicates that the conceptual representation of 'run' and the prototype for that concept is the version that indicates movement.

Children acquire concepts differently from adults. Developmental psychology shows that children may operate with concepts that are quite different as seen in the way they under extend or overextend concepts. Under extension of concepts in children is presented for example, when for a child 'dog' can only be used to mean their pet and not any other dog around. A child may overextend concepts by using the word 'daddy' to refer to every male adult around. Therefore concepts may be different reflecting the fact that items in a child's world may have different salience than for an adult (Sperber and Wilson, 1995:83-90)

One traditional approach to describing concepts is to define them by using sets of necessary and sufficient conditions. This approach comes from thinking about concepts in the following way: the concept WOMAN must contain the information necessary to decide when something in the world is a woman or not. This can be achieved by the use of characteristics or attributes, for instance,

x is a woman if and only if L

Where L is a list of attributes, like:

x is human;

x is adult;

x is female.

Concepts are therefore viewed as lists of bits of knowledge: the necessary and sufficient conditions for something to be an example of that concept (Saeed, 1993:35).

When using language, background information is needed to interpret the meaning of an utterance. People understand each other if they share a common background information depending on context which plays a role in interpretation of utterances. The background information is usually acquired from childhood and so one has stored information in the mind from a young age. If the background information differs between the speaker and hearer, the intended meaning may differ. This kind of information is represented in the form of concepts that are stored in the mind (Saeed, 1993:34).

Lexical pragmatic approach comprises two theories:

1. Lexical semantics.
2. Conversational implicatures.

1.7.2 Lexical semantics

Lexical semantics deals with word meaning. Words may either be taken to denote things in the world or concepts, depending on the particular approach to lexical semantics. The units of meaning in lexical semantics are lexical units, which a speaker can continually add to throughout their life, learning new words and their meanings (Mmbwanga, 2010:4). For example:

The word *chama* which at first meant ‘to like somebody or something’ acquired another meaning ‘to be happy’ and later on a third meaning added to the same word which is ‘to accept’. In this case, new meanings have been added to the same word, showing that human beings have the potential to add new meanings to the already existing words.

Another example of a word that has acquired new meanings in addition to its original one is *ikhala* whose original denotation is ‘to sit’. Later, the word acquired another meaning which is ‘to meet as a group’. The same word can still be used to refer to a situation where somebody goes to a place and takes too long to come back.

Lexical semantics studies how and what the words of a language denote. Words may either be taken to denote things in the world or concepts depending on the particular approach to lexical semantics. The goal of lexical semantics is to study the relationship between the words and the mentally represented concepts they encode. Lexical semantics goes further to account for multiword units. These are cases where a group of words have a unitary meaning which does not correspond to the individual meaning of the words used (Pustejovsky, 1995:47). For example,

In Lumarama, the word *saya* means ‘to plead’ but it has also acquired another meaning ‘to pray’. In the same way, the word *saba* which means ‘to borrow’ is also used to mean ‘to pray’. The two

words show an example of words that have a unitary meaning in addition to their original meanings.

There is a common euphemism used among the Lumarama speakers to refer to ‘urinating’. This is *okhwisaaba* which has its different meaning of ‘washing hands’. *Okhutsia mubulimo* is also used to refer to ‘urinating’ although the expression literally means ‘to go into the bush’.

1.7.3 Conversational Implicatures

Conversational implicatures refer to the relationship between what is said and what is meant in a conversation. The term was introduced H. Paul Grice who suggested that there is a set of overarching assumptions guiding the conduct of conversation. Speakers of a language are able to draw inferences about what is meant but not what is actually said. The ease with which people recognize and interpret implicatures begins from their knowledge of how people in their linguistic community use language to communicate with each other (Saeed, 1993:204)

Grice pioneered the belief that ‘not all facts about word use give direct insight into word meaning’. However; his strict distinction between what is said (semantics) and what is implicated (pragmatics) does not take account of pragmatic processes in communication. A conversational implicature is therefore not associated with any expression but is usually inferred from the use of a certain utterance from the context (Levinson, 1983:97). For example:

Jane: What are we eating for supper?

Mary: Mother has come back at last.

The utterances in the example could be pragmatically be interpreted as follows:

Jane: Do you know the type of food we are going to eat for supper?

Mary: Mother came at some time before the time of speaking after being away.

To the native speaker's interpretation of the above utterances, what is ordinarily communicated involves more than the literal expressions. This means that during the interpretation of an utterance, the hearer does not only focus on the words used, but has to make use of his contextual knowledge to draw inferences about what has been said. We can therefore claim that Jane and Mary meant something different from what they had actually said. In their conversation, this is what they probably meant:

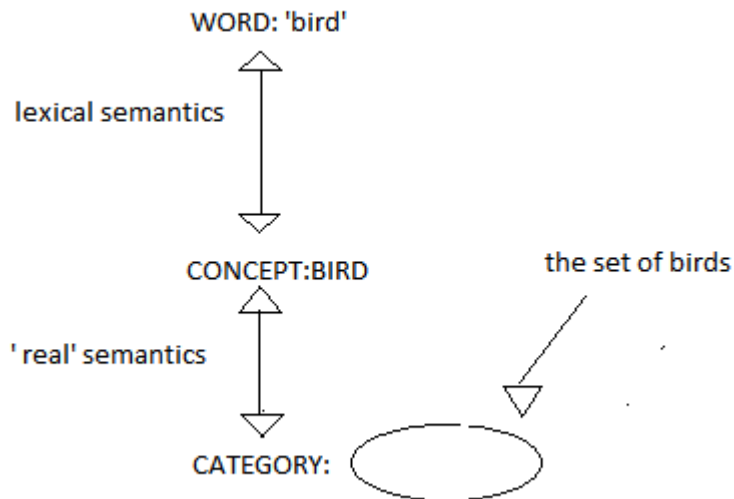
Jane: You should be ready to prepare the food.

Mary: I don't need to prepare the food because mother has come (Levinson,1983: 97-98).

Lexical pragmatics has a goal of explaining how hearers bridge the gap between the concept encoded and the concept expressed by use of a word. A concept is a heading in memory which is a constituent of the conceptual representation of utterances or thoughts (Sperber and Wilson, 2007-2008:5)

For example, the concept BIRD, which is encoded by the word 'bird' denotes the category of birds and activates encyclopedic knowledge which can be added to the context and used in comprehending utterances about birds:

Figure 1: Encoding a Concept



(Wilson D lectures, 2006-07:2)

The claim considered here is the word 'bird' which encodes the concept BIRD, may communicate a slightly different concept which is often referred to as an *ad hoc* concept which is typically a narrowing of the encoded concept BIRD to denote only a subset of birds or a broadening of the encoded concept BIRD to denote birds plus other things too.

1.7.4 *Ad hoc* concepts

Human beings can construct *ad hoc* concepts on the model of existing concepts using contextual assumptions which are derived from encyclopedic entries of existing concepts with different denotations. An *ad hoc* concept is one that is made up on the spot, one that a person is unlikely to have had already made (Horn and Ward, 2004:618)

According to (Carston, 2002:322), the term *ad hoc* refers to concepts that are constructed pragmatically by a hearer as he tries to comprehend an utterance. Ad hoc concepts are not given linguistically but they are made in specific contexts in response to specific expectations of relevance. People can incorporate different information from long term memory in the encyclopedic entries to form distinct concepts for a single category. For example:

The category of 'lions' can be conceptualized as 'living in the bush', 'carnivorous, or dangerous, depending on an individual's knowledge of 'lions'. The basic characteristic of *ad hoc* concept is that it is accessed in a particular context through a spontaneous process of pragmatic inference and is distinct from a concept which is accessed by the process of lexical decoding.

(Horn and Ward, 2004:618) claim that the term *ad hoc* concept comes from the psychologist Lawrence Bursalou, who argued that the content of a concept on a given occasion of use is constructed *ad hoc* out of the range of encyclopedic information. When using a concept in inference, one assembles different sets of assumptions. He goes on to suggest that the construction of a concept is a process which is constrained by discourse context, accessibility of assumptions and relevance.

The construction of an *ad hoc* could either be a narrowing or broadening of the linguistically specified meaning. The variation in the lexical pragmatic interpretation as a result of narrowing or broadening, results from the notion of *ad hoc* concept. For example:

Inzu may refer to 'a house', 'marriage' or 'a family'. When the same word is used in different utterances, the hearer will use his contextual knowledge to construct *ad hoc* concepts on the spot to enable him infer the meaning of the utterances given. This happens in cases where the hearer already has information on the encyclopedic entries of the mentioned concept. The hearer will

thereafter incorporate the information from long term memory in the encyclopedic entries to form distinct concepts for the given word.

The expressions below explain how *ad hoc* concepts can be created:

- *Yombashe inzu indayi.*
He built house good.
'He built a good house.'
- *Inzu yanje ibula omulembe.*
House mine lacks peace.
'My family has no peace.'
- *Nechesa yanyolere inzu.*
Nechesa got a house.
'Nechesa got married.'

When the three utterances are given, the hearer automatically applies his contextual knowledge to determine exactly what the speaker intends to mean. The hearer's knowledge of the encyclopedic entries of the word *inzu* enables him to get to the speaker's meaning. With the three meanings of the word *inzu* in mind, the hearer immediately constructs *ad hoc* concepts which enable him to narrow down the encoded concept to denote only the intended speaker's meaning.

1.8 LEXICAL PRAGMATIC PROCESSES

There are various types of lexical pragmatic processes that do correspond to the ways in which the concept communicated by use of a word may differ from the concept encoded. These are:

1. Lexical narrowing.
2. Lexical broadening.
3. Approximation.
4. Metaphorical extensions.

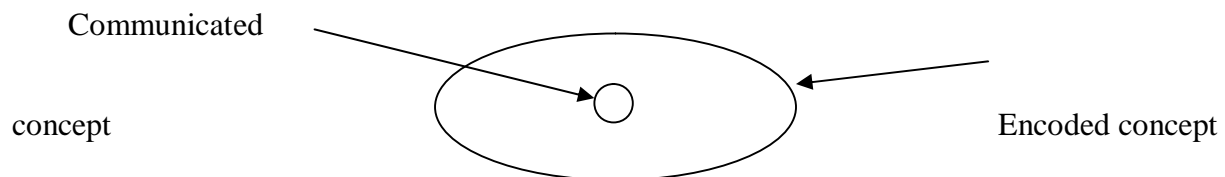
5. Category extensions.

6. Hyperbole.

1.8.1 Lexical Narrowing

This is a process whereby a word is used to convey a more specific sense than the encoded one by restricting its linguistically specified denotation. Some approaches within lexical semantics maintain that the different senses of a polysemous word (a word with more than one meaning) can be restricted by means of semantic operators sensitive to the linguistic context, without falling back on pragmatics.

Figure 2: The Process of Narrowing



(Mmbwanga, 2010:7)

For example:

- *Omusatsa wanje anywetsanga.*
Husband mine drinks.
'My husband drinks.'

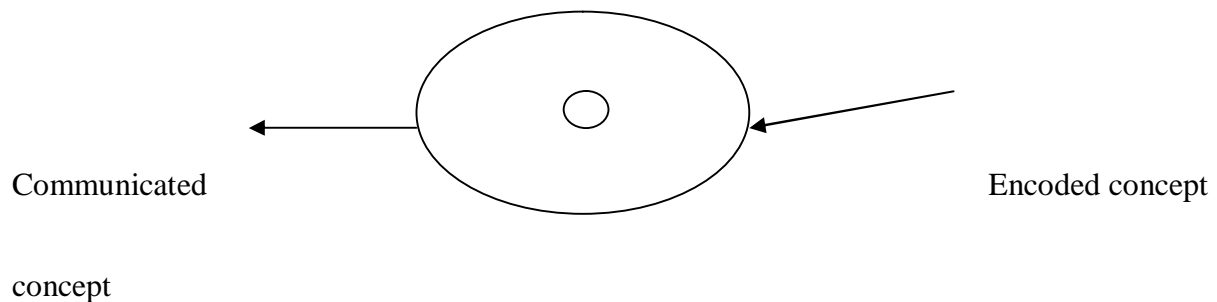
The word drink may mean 'drink liquid', 'drink alcohol' or 'drink a lot of alcohol'. Drink might convey not the encoded sense 'drink liquid' but more specifically 'drink alcohol'.

1.8.2 Lexical Broadening

Here a word is used to convey a more general sense than the encoded one, that is, what a word refers to increases in meaning. For example:

The word ‘dog’ referred to a specific breed of dogs but now it is used to refer to any dog.

Figure 3: The Process of Broadening



(Mmbwanga, 2010:8)

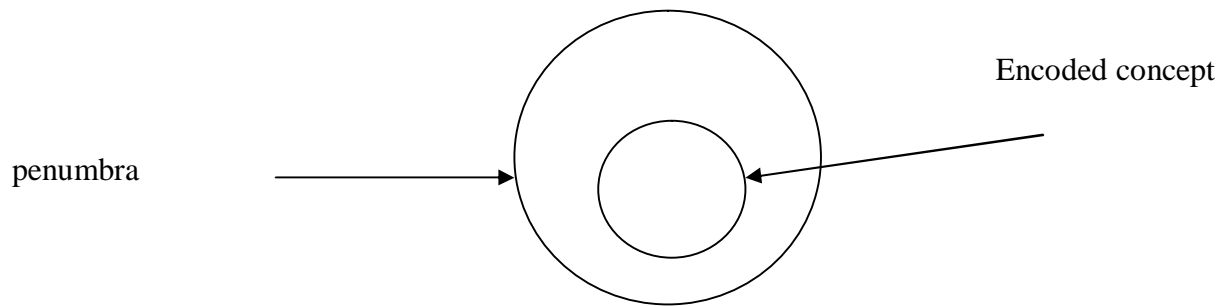
1.8.3 Approximation

In this type of process, the communicated concept departs further from the encoded concept. For example:

- *Inzu yanje iri hambi hushiiro.*
House mine is near market.
'My house is near the market.'

The word ‘near’ does not give us the exact distance from the house to the market. Different people will encode the above utterance differently depending on their understanding of the word ‘near’.

Figure 4: The Process of Approximation



(Wambugu, 2010:10)

1.8.4 Metaphoric Extensions

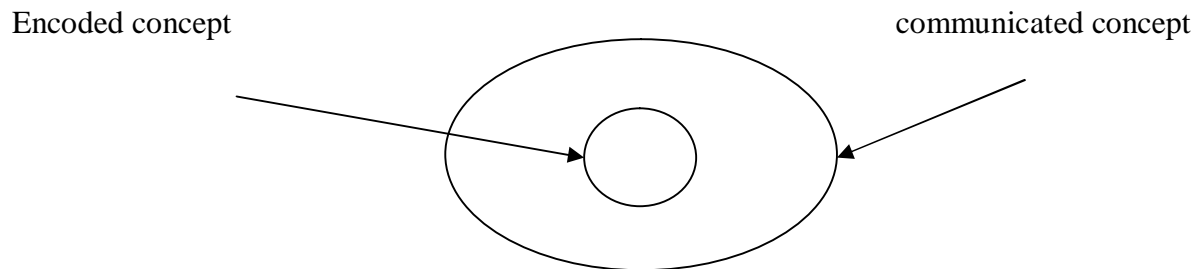
This is a type of semantic change in which a word or phrase literary denoting one idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness between them .For example:

- *Papa wanje ne ingwe.*
Father mine is a leopard.
'My father is a leopard.'

In the example, the word 'leopard' encodes the concept LEOPARD. The hearer's encyclopedic knowledge of leopard includes not only the information that it is an animal, but that it is dangerous, inhuman, lives in the bush, cannibal and ruthless.

The hearer therefore constructs a hypothesis about the concept the speaker wants to express and the implications the speaker intends to convey .The interpretation is therefore that my father is not literary a leopard, but a ruthless man.

Figure 5: The Process of Metaphoric Extensions



(Mmbwanga, 2010:10).

1.8.5 Category Extension

In this process the name of a salient category member is extended to apply to the whole broader category to which it belongs. For example:

Kimbo was a brand name for a type of cooking fat but now the name refers to all cooking fats. When you are sent to the shops to buy *kimbo*, you need not to specifically look for the cooking fat with that brand name because any cooking fat qualifies to be *kimbo*. This is so due to the fact that cooking oil with the brand name *kimbo* was used for so long that people got used to the name thus relating it to all cooking fats.

1.8.6 Hyperbole

This involves the use of exaggeration but is not meant to be taken literally. For example:

Someone healthy says,

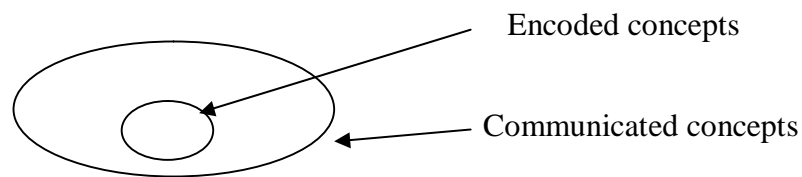
Inzala inziranga.

Hunger is me killing.

‘The hunger is killing me.’

The word ‘killing’ encodes the concept KILLING. When the word killing is used, we first think about death. In this case we understand that the speaker is simply complaining that he is very hungry. Therefore, our understanding of the word ‘kill’ includes the information that someone is very hungry and desperate for food.

Figure 6: The Process of Hyperbole



(Mmbwanga, 2010:15).

1.9 LITERATURE REVIEW

Bloomfield (1933) discusses different types of semantic changes. He mentions narrowing, widening, metaphor and hyperbole among others. He claims that every semantic change of a word would also affect all other words in a lexical field. From Bloomfield’s work, this study has highlighted a number of semantic changes affecting the Lumarama language, out of which there are two major ones: lexical narrowing and lexical broadening. This study focuses on the two main types of semantic changes where lexical broadening manifests itself in different ways.

In her unpublished thesis, Wambugu (2010) analyses semantic shifts in Gikuyu lexemes, using the lexical pragmatic approach. She gives great emphasis to the different types of semantic shifts and the various ways in which different scholars have classified them. Wambugu goes on to

disambiguate the words which have acquired new meanings. She relates most of her work from Wilson, D. Lectures (2006-2007) and Muyuku (2009).

Wambugu (2010) further looks at how the pragmatic processes have resulted into the shift in the meaning of the affected lexemes and analyses the conditions for semantic shift in the Gikuyu lexemes. In her study, she discusses information about concepts in details. She concludes that narrowing, a lexical pragmatic process has been tested to establish if it could help in disambiguation of concepts.

From her thesis, it is evident that the lexical pragmatic processes that affect the Gikuyu language can be seen to influence the change in meaning of Lumarama words. This is due to the fact that the two languages belong to the Bantu group of speakers and therefore what affects one language is likely to affect the other. Wambugu's conclusion that narrowing has been tested to establish if it helps in disambiguation of concept has proved vital in this study. In cases where an utterance or a word gives more than one meaning, the hearer simply needs to narrow down to one meaning with the help of his contextual knowledge of the concept being referred to.

Stephen Ullmann (1957, 1962) comes up with analysis beyond the single words. He borrows his study from the word-field analyses of Trier (1931) who had claimed that every semantic shift in a word would also affect other words in a lexical field. Ullmann distinguishes between the nature and consequences of semantic shift in lexical items of a language. He claims that whenever there is a semantic shift in a word, certain changes must occur in terms of the resultant meaning of the word. This means that the meaning could narrow down so that it becomes more specific compared to the earlier one. Sometimes when there is a semantic shift in a language, the meanings of the affected words is likely to become more general after broadening. Some words

change their meanings from positive to negative and vice versa. The same case has been identified in the study of the effects of semantic shift in Lumarama.

Blank (1998), is another scholar who wrote about semantic shift. He writes about the various forces that trigger semantic shifts in a language. Blank says that semantic shifts could be caused by linguistic factors which can be seen in the use of words in a language. Words may be used in different contexts to bring out different meanings that speakers wish to convey. Here one lexeme can portray different meanings depending on the context in which the lexeme occurs. He also mentions psychological factors which influence the way people use words in a language depending on their perception of the words in the mind. When speakers of a language feel that a word is taboo or vulgar, they would prefer to use euphemisms which have the same meaning as the words they would have used.

In the same way, Lumarama has undergone semantic change due to a number of factors related to what Blank mentions. Socio cultural forces which trigger semantic shifts in a language as mentioned by Blank have played a role in the semantic shifts that are present in Lumarama. When speakers of a language mingle with other cultures, they automatically choose words to suit their current situations involving the relationship of the two cultures due social aspects. Speakers of Lumarama have also been forced to add new meanings to words which are related to new innovations or ideas as a result of technology.

1.9.1 Theoretical Literature

Lexical pragmatics theory was invented by Blutner (1998). In his argument, he used several examples to show that a lexical item and a syntactically complex equivalent of it may make

different contributions to the interpretation of a sentence without making different contributions to its semantic structure.

Using Grice's maxims of conversation, he demonstrated that the difference between linguistically encoded semantic structure and the suggested meaning is a consequence of general principles of co-operative behavior.

Lexical pragmatic approach tries to give a systematic and explanatory account of pragmatic phenomena that are connected with semantic under specification of lexical items. The conceptual core of lexical pragmatics demands a formulation of conversational implicatures paired with the idea of semantic under specification of the lexicon and appropriate representation of contextual an encyclopedic knowledge(Wilson D lectures, 2006-07:1)

Grice's fundamental assumption is that communication is not only a rational activity but also a co-operative activity. Each conversation has an accepted purpose or direction which participants work jointly towards over and above the common goal of understanding and being understood. He argued that this predictability of inference formation could be explained by postulating a co-operative principle.

According to Grice, conversational implicatures are those non-truth functional aspects of utterances which are conveyed by virtue of the assumption that the speaker and hearer are obeying the co-operative principle of conversation and more specifically various conversation maxims. The co-operative principle is a kind of tacit agreement by speakers and listeners to co-operate in communication.

1.9.1.1 The Co-operative Principle

“Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged”. To ensure that speakers obey the co-operative principle, Grice identifies as guidelines, four basic conversational maxims or general principles underlying the efficient co-operative use of language which jointly express a general co-operative principle (Levinson, 1983:101).

1.9.1.2 The Maxims of Conversation

Grice formalized an assumption that when engaged in a conversation, human beings behave rationally and co-operatively in a co-operative principle. Assuming that such a principle is at work in communication, Grice proceeds to distinguish four categories of special application of this principle under which more specific maxims and sub-maxims fall (Saeed, 1993:204).

These maxims are borrowed from Kant and they are:

A. The maxim of quality

1. Do not say what you believe is false.
2. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

B. The maxim of quantity

1. Make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purposes of the exchange.
2. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

C. The maxim of relevance

Make your contributions relevant.

D. The maxim of manner

Be perspicuous, and specifically:

1. Avoid ambiguity.
2. Avoid obscurity.
3. Be brief.
4. Be orderly.

The maxims specify what participants have to do in order to converse in a maximally efficient, rational, co-operative way: they should speak sincerely, relevantly and clearly, while providing sufficient information. Grice claims that in interpreting an utterance, hearers assume that the co-operative principle and maxims have been obeyed and look for an interpretation that satisfies this assumption. The hearers also assume that the speaker believes, and was trying to communicate something more than what was strictly speaking said (Levinson, 1983:102)

1.10 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Native speakers were used as informants during data collection. The data was collected from Lumarama speakers who were believed to have native speaker competence of the language. The data collected comprised of single words or sentences that conveyed more than one meaning. The informants were expected to suggest words whose meaning had either narrowed down to become more specific or the ones whose meanings had become broader with time.

The data was collected from the older generation of Lumarama speakers first, followed by the younger generation. This enabled the researcher to present the difference in the usage of some words and sentences by the two groups. The data that was collected from the older people was compared to that used by the young speakers to determine whether the two groups use the same words in given contexts.

Data collection was done by interviewing the Lumarama native speakers, listening to radio stations broadcasting in Luhya dialects, as well the researcher's contribution as a native speaker possessing native speaker competence.

1.11 SIGNIFICANCE

The study will be very beneficial to the younger generation of Lumarama mother tongue speakers who may not understand why Lumarama has a lot of ambiguity. An answer is therefore given to the question why some words may elicit a variety of meanings when used in different contexts. People learning Lumarama as a second language for example, women married into the Marama community will learn to be careful when making some statements due to the awareness that some words produce different meanings when uttered in specific contexts.

CHAPTER TWO

SEMANTIC SHIFTS

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is going to highlight the different types of semantic shifts using examples of utterances with words whose meanings have shifted. The definitions of semantic shift shall be given using the points of view from different scholars like Ullmann (1957), Murphy (2003), among others. Contextual knowledge is very important in interpreting the meaning of a word. This will be clearly discussed in this chapter through an explanation of the role of the context.

Lexical pragmatics distinguishes two main types of lexical –pragmatic processes, corresponding to the ways in which the concept as communicated by use of a word may differ from the concept encoded. The two processes will be presented using examples from Lumarama. Of the two types of lexical-pragmatic processes, lexical broadening contains other sub-types of semantic shifts as will be seen in the chapter.

2.1 SEMANTIC SHIFTS

Semantic shift refers to the evolution that a word usage undergoes hence resulting into a different but often related meaning to the original meaning. Semantic shift is also known as semantic change, semantic drift or semantic progression. Therefore, semantic shift simply refers to the change in the meaning of a word. Some of the changes are easy to understand, while others are quite surprising. Like other aspects of language, the meanings of words can change over time, although the changes may occur in different ways.

When words acquire totally different meanings from the ones they had earlier, they are said to have undergone a semantic shift. This may lead to the conclusion that semantic shift occurs when a new word becomes attached to a sense or a new sense attached to a name. (Murphy, 2003:20) notes that words are polysemous, meaning that they can be associated with more than one sense.

For example in Lumarama the word *obukhana* could mean either a certain ‘traditional musical instrument’ or a ‘radio’.

(Ullmann, 1957:174) asserts that a word may retain its previous sense while at the same time acquire one or other senses as seen in the above example where the word *obukhana* still maintains its original sense of a musical instrument and has also added another meaning of a radio.

Sometimes a series of semantic shifts occurs over an extended period of time resulting in a meaning that is completely unrelated to the original sense of a word. For example:

The word ‘hearse’ originally referred to a triangular harrow. Later, it denoted a triangular frame for church candles and later on was used to refer to the device that held candles over a coffin. In a subsequent shift, it came to refer to the framework on which curtains were hung over a coffin or tomb. Still later, hearse was used to refer to the coffin itself before finally taking on its current sense of the vehicle used to transport a coffin (Trask, 1994:43).

Lexical items in a language have a variety of senses and connotations which can be added, removed or altered over time often to the extent that cognates (related words) across space and time have very different meanings.

For example:

The word *nyira* in Lumarama results in different meanings when used in different contexts as in the utterances below

- *Biakhulia bilanyira.*
'The food will be cold.'
- *Yerushe nanyira.*
'She ran and fainted.'
- *Abasomi banyirire.*
'The students are quiet.'

From the examples, the word *nyira* has gone through different phases as the meaning kept on changing or drifting from the original meaning and finally ends up with meanings which are totally different from one another. This therefore leads to the conclusion that semantic shift is a process in which a word usually undergoes evolution in its usage to the point that the modern meaning is radically different from the original usage. The same word is still used so the context of use enables the hearer to differentiate one meaning from another. Using the examples above, the word *nyira* may mean 'to be cold', 'to faint' or 'to be quiet'. The three meanings are totally unrelated despite the fact that they belong to the same word.

The study of semantic shift in Lumarama cannot be detached from matters of context as recommended by (Ullmann, 1957:194). He argues that in order to ascertain the applied meaning an feeling tone of a word which translates to contextual meaning and attitude to the hearer- what is meant in regard to the word must be established, that is, the most prevalent context at a given point of time where a word can be applied.

2.2 THE ROLE OF CONTEXT

“Context refers to the set of mentally-presented assumptions which are actually used in the interpretation of a given utterance. The assumptions may be drawn from the interpretation of the preceding text, or from the observation of the speaker and what is going on in the environment. The assumptions may also be drawn from cultural knowledge, scientific knowledge, common sense assumptions, and, more generally, any item of shared or idiosyncratic information that the hearer has access to at the time of the utterance (Wilson, 2007-08:4) For example:

- *Abandu banywetsanga.*
People drinking.
'People are drinking'.

The meaning of the utterance will keep on changing depending on the hearer's contextual knowledge. Say the speaker informs the hearer at a shopping centre pointing to a bar, the hearer gets the meaning of 'drink' as referring to alcohol. If the utterance is made at home in a house, then what first comes into the mind of the hearer is to drink water. In this case it is the context that plays an important role in identifying the meaning of the word 'drink'.

In a cognitive approach to pragmatics what matters most is the mental representation of the facts that the hearer constructs and uses in identifying the speaker's meaning. Context is therefore a psychological construct. The physical environment and previous discourse are obvious sources of contextual assumptions that may help in identifying the speaker's meaning.

The hearer's choice of context makes a difference in the interpretation process. Once a hearer knows what contextual assumptions need to be used, the intended implications follow by straightforward logical deduction.

For example:

Sue treats other people's money as if it were her own.

From the example, if we assume that Sue treats her own money very carefully, it will follow logically that she treats other people's money very carefully. On the other hand; if we assume that she spends her own money the way she likes, then it follows logically that she spends other people's money any way she likes (Sperber and Wilson, 2007-2008:3)

The conclusion here is that context selection determines the hearer's interpretation of implicit meaning of utterances. Basing on the fact that contextual assumptions affect the outcome of the interpretation process, then in order to recognize the intended interpretation of an utterance (the speaker's meaning) the hearer must make use of the intended context (the intended set of contextual assumptions).

The hearer's goal in interpreting the utterance therefore, is to identify the speaker's meaning. The class of possible speaker's meanings depends on the meaning of the sentence uttered and on the contextual assumptions available. The hearer's task is to construct a hypothesis about the speaker's meaning by choosing from this wide range of possible interpretations, an actual combination of context, explicit content and implicit content. The task of pragmatic theory is to explain how context can affect the meaning of certain kind.

2.3 TYPES OF SEMANTIC SHIFTS

Lexical pragmatics distinguishes two main types of lexical –pragmatic processes, corresponding to the ways in which the concept communicated by use of a word may differ from the concept encoded. The two processes are: lexical narrowing and lexical broadening (Mmbwanga, 2010:7).

2.3.1 Lexical Narrowing

Bloomfield (1933) defines lexical narrowing as a process through which the meaning of a word changes from a super ordinate level to a subordinate level. Here the meaning of a word becomes less general or less inclusive than its historically earlier meaning. For example:

When the word *omukati* was borrowed into Lumarama from Kiswahili, it first referred to all foodstuffs made from wheat flour. With time, the meaning of *omukati* has narrowed down to refer to bread only, which is also made from flour.

In lexical narrowing, a word is used in a more specific sense than the encoded one, resulting in narrowing of the linguistically specified denotation. The effect of narrowing therefore is to highlight a particular subject of the linguistically specified denotation. (Wilson D, 2006-07:3)

For example:

- *Omwana omubi*
Child bad.
'A bad child.'
- *Amakhuuwa amabi.*
Words bad.
'Bad words.'
- *Ingubo imbi.*
Dress bad.
'A bad dress.'
- *Shakhulia eshibi.*
Food bad.
Bad food

All the examples use the word 'bad' but with different meanings to show clearly that the meaning of the word 'bad' narrows down depending on the context of use. For instance; 'a bad child' is one who has no respect especially to the elders or those older in age compared to him.

However; ‘bad words’ may be abusive, vulgar or hurting. In the same way, ‘a bad dress’ could be short, too tight or not pleasing to people’s eyes. Lastly, ‘bad food’ is usually not well cooked, stale or not safe for human consumption.

From the examples, lexical narrowing is a flexible process since the encoded meaning may be narrowed to different degrees and in different direction depending on the context of use rather than a particular occasion of use. The effect of narrowing is to highlight a particular subject of the linguistically specified denotation.

2.3.2 Lexical Broadening

This is the process in which the meaning of a word becomes more general or more inclusive than its historically earlier form (Trask, 1994:41) Here a word is used to convey a more general sense than the encoded one. This means that what a word refers to increases in, as in the use of the word ‘*eshiayo*’.

The word initially referred to a goat, which was the most common domesticated animal in the Marama community. The word *eshiayo* means ‘what is grazed’. With time, the Marama speakers started domesticating other animals like cattle and sheep in addition to the goats. This resulted in the generalization of the name given to all the animals. Today, the Marama people refer to the named animals as *ebiayo* to mean ‘those which are grazed. Therefore, *eshiayo* could be a goat, a cow or a sheep.

According to Campbell (1998:267), the term broadening is used in reference to a type of widening of meaning which results from a generalization from the specific case to a class of which the specific case is a member. Campbell noted that earlier works of semantic change was

not totally without generalization. He notes that a word starts out with an original meaning, then acquires additional multiple meaning. For example:

The original meaning of *amang'ondo* was the ten cent coin. Today the word has increased its meaning to refer to all types of money including coins and notes. This clearly explains Campbell's observation of the generalization that occurs when the meaning of a word broadens.

Broadening can also be seen in cases of borrowing of lexical items from another language. The concept 'motor car' refers to a type of a vehicle in English language. Lumarama speakers borrowed the concept and to them *omutoka* refers to all types of vehicles. In the mind of the hearer, the concept 'motor car' activates the contextual assumptions according to the hearer's encyclopedic entries which he chooses from while adjusting the context. The appropriate context is attained through relevance when the hearer uses less processing effort to arrive at the broadened *ad hoc* '*omutoka*'. When the meaning of a word becomes broader, the word means everything it used to mean and some more, that is, what a word refers to increases.

Wambugu (2010:11) alludes to Muyuku's definition of lexical broadening as the process where a word is used to convey a more general sense than the encoded one, with consequent widening of the linguistically specified denotation. For example:

- *Amanyeko keke kasambire.*
Abuses his burnt me.
'His abuses burnt me.'

The word *samba*, meaning 'to burn' conveys more than the encoded sense. Assumptions about the concept 'burn', that it inflicts pain or hurts may be transferred to anything that causes pain whether physical or psychological. Therefore, the meaning of burn has been broadened to mean 'hurt psychologically'.

Lexical pragmatic theory highlights different varieties of lexical broadening where a word may be used to convey a more general sense than the encoded one. The processes are:

1. Approximation.
2. Metaphoric extensions.
3. Category extensions.
4. Hyperbole.

2.3.3 Approximation

This is a minimal type of broadening which involves the use of a word with a relatively strict sense to apply to a penumbra of cases that fall outside its linguistically specified denotation. Here a logical or defining feature of the lexically encoded concept is dropped in the process of arriving at the intended interpretation. (Carston, 2002:329)

In approximations, for instance, a word with a relatively strict sense is extended to a range of items which fall just outside its linguistically-specified denotation. Loose uses of round numbers, geometric terms and negatively –defined terms show good examples of approximations.

For example:

- *Bamenya hambi nende omwalo.*
'They live near the river.'

The standards of precision vary so that an utterance which is false may be accepted by the hearer as true. The example above does not give us the exact distance from the river, and is therefore not accurate but the hearer's understanding of the word 'near' enables her to approximate how far the river is. The standards of precision are different from one conversation to another and may change in the course of a single conversation depending on the context.

Different degrees and types of approximations apply differently depending on the circumstances.

The following examples show the use of one word in different degrees that elicit different meanings.

- *Inzu ikhaya.*
House empty.
'A house in which nobody lives' or 'one that has nothing.'
- *Amakhuwa amakhaya.*
Words empty.
'Lies'
- *Yakhupa esikhaya.*
He beat me empty.
'He beat me without a reason.'
- *Omufuko omukhaya.*
Pocket empty.
'Without money.'
- *Omukunda omukhaya.*
Farm empty.
'An infertile land.'
- *Chenda esikhaya.*
Walk empty.
'Travel without carrying anything.'
- *Kona esikhaya.*
Sleep empty.
'Sleep naked.'
- *Soma esikhaya.*
Learn empty.
'Learn freely without paying fees.'
- *Omukhasi omukhaya.*
Woman empty.
'A lazy woman.'
- *Obusuma obukhaya.*
'Ugali' empty.
'Ugali that is eaten without accompaniment like meat, or fish.'

2.3.4 Category Extensions

According to Wilson (2003:4) category extension is typified by the use of salient brand names to denote a broader category including items from less salient brands. For example, *omo* is a brand name for a specific type of washing powder but the name is widely used to refer to all washing powders. This is because *omo* was the only washing powder used for a long period of time and thus the name is associated with all washing powders. When the speakers of Lumarama want to talk about any washing powder, they could present it in the following way:

- *Fuyira tsingubo tsindafu omo.*
Wash clothes white *omo*.
'Wash white clothes with *omo*.'

The example given above leads to the conclusion that the name of a salient member is extended to apply to the whole broader category to which it belongs. The speaker does not specifically refer to a specific type of washing powder but means that white clothes should be washed using any washing powder.

Another example of category extension is seen in the use of the word *Nissan* to refer to the public service vehicles used on Kenyan roads. *Nissan* is a brand name for some makes of vehicles but here it is used to refer to a certain type of passenger vehicles irrespective of the make. In the example below, the word *Nissan* has been used to refer to a vehicle that carries passengers and not its make.

- *Baninire inisani.*
'They boarded a *Nissan*.'

2.3.5 Metaphoric Extensions

Trask (1994:43) defines metaphor as a figure of speech based on a perceived similarity between distinct objects or actions. Metaphors are figures of speech which are not taken literally. Metaphorical change usually involves a word with a concrete meaning taking on a more abstract sense, although the word's original meaning is not lost.

For example:

- *Wesonga ne ling'u.*
Wesonga is hyena.
'Wesonga is a hyena.'

In the example above, the cognitive environment is used to extend the encoded concept 'hyena' on the person 'Wesonga'. In the interpretation of this metaphor, the context of use shows that we are talking about a person and not an animal. Therefore the hearer identifies the encyclopedic entries of the word hyena which include: an animal, greedy, lives in the bush, eats flesh. Of the entries identified, he singles out those which can be related to a human being. This will lead to the conclusion that Wesonga is greedy.

2.3.6 Hyperbole

This is a radical type of broadening which allows the communicated concept to depart further from the encoded concept. For example:

- *Inzala ilanzira.*
Hunger will kill me.
'I am starving.'

The speaker of the above utterance simply means that he is very hungry. In real situations, people do not die of hunger when there is food around. Among the speakers of Lumarama, the

above example is commonly used by people who feel they have gone past their usual eating time and are therefore very hungry. The utterance is said to be a hyperbole because the speaker can afford the food and is only hungry. Another example is:

- *Omutoka kwanje kumusambire inda.*
Car mine burnt him stomach.
'My car has burnt his stomach.'

This is an utterance which can be made by someone who bought a car and feels that the other person has become jealous of it. Under normal circumstances, when somebody has a burnt stomach, that is a serious case that requires medication. In this case, the idea of a burnt stomach is just an exaggeration to show that the person in question is extremely jealous.

CHAPTER THREE

CAUSES OF SEMANTIC SHIFTS

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will highlight the causes of semantic shift from the views of different writers especially Meillet who contributes majorly on what causes semantic shifts in a language. Meillet suggests linguistic causes, historical causes and social causes. Contributions of writers like McMahon and Langacker are acknowledged in this chapter.

Different factors that trigger semantic changes in Lumarama are discussed in this chapter. Socio-cultural forces are seen to cause new meanings to be attached to the already existing lexical items. Technology and civilization is another factor that triggers semantic shift in the language. There are some semantic shifts which are as a result of the introduction of the Western religion among the speakers of Lumarama. The most significant factors that result in semantic shifts are psychological factors .here we have the use of metaphors, euphemisms and metonymy.

The consequences of semantic shift have been highlighted in this chapter. The processes that result from semantic shift according to Ullmann (1957, 1962) are widening of the meaning of the affected words in the language in addition to narrowing of the meaning of words. In addition to the resultant processes, there is amelioration where the meaning of words becomes more positive than the original one and pejoration which results in the meaning of a word being more negative in its usage.

3.1 CAUSES OF SEMANTIC SHIFT

According to McMahon (1994:180), Meillet (1905) proposed three causes of semantic shift namely: linguistic causes, historical causes, and social causes. Later on, Ullmann (1962) included the psychological causes of semantic shift. In his work, McMahon notes that "...a word tends to acquire a new meaning due to its use by a particular social group or a word is used in a specific sense by some group which comes into common currency with an extended meaning"

(McMahon, 1994:180)

Since humans conceptualize the world, physical entities and the totality of their experiences in terms of categories, the same conceptualization and categorization processes must be relevant to language. Language may be considered to be conceptually-based, whereas its structure depends on the sets of interrelated categories encompassing the typical members of a given category, rooted in human experience and perception of the world. (Langacker, 1995:106)

Although the subdivision into linguistic(or language-internal) and extra linguistic (or language-external) causes of semantic change was formulated as early as the turn of the 20th century (Meillet, 1905:74–75), it is believed that apart from the extra linguistic motivations for semantic change which have been traditionally perceived as such, it is worth pointing to another group of language-external motivations, which result not as much from the surrounding extra linguistic reality, as from language-external mechanisms of human perception and cognition.

Regarding traditional extra linguistic motivation, the following aspects may be listed: socio-cultural causes (including legal systems, social taboos etc.); technological and civilization progress and religion. There are psychological factors (including taboo, euphemism, hyperbole)

also largely dependent on the culture-specific and idiosyncratic context. These areas, regardless of how specific their classification might be, are the most obvious candidates to be analyzed for an extra linguistic potential to motivate semantic developments of words, as they seem prone to continual change over time.

3.1.1 Socio-cultural Causes

Socio-cultural reality is a very ample source of extra linguistic motivations for diachronic semantic change, as the contexts sometimes vary dramatically in the course of time. Thus, new meanings may be “officially” attached to the already existing lexical items, the full comprehension of which is totally dependent on an adequate amount of knowledge on a particular language-external context. For example:

The word *olusi* in Lumarama which initially referred to ‘a string’ ended up acquiring a new meaning in addition to the old meaning due to social aspects. A string can stretch from one place to another and it is this feature that led to the transfer of meaning from ‘string’ to ‘news’. People normally pass information from one place to another just like a string. Presently, in Lumarama the word *olusi* refers to either ‘a string’ or ‘news’ depending on the context. For instance:

- *Tsia okule olusi.*
Go buy a string
- *Mbekho olusi okhurula ingo.*
Give me news from home.

From the examples given, the word *olusi* has been used in two different contexts to bring out the meanings attached to it, that is, the original meaning (string) and the shifted meaning (news).

There is the word *inzu* in Lumarama which has had other meanings attached to it due to their socio-cultural belief in the importance of the institution of marriage. The word originally meant 'a house'. The recognition of the importance of a shelter for a family led to the new meaning of the word *inzu* to be 'a family'. The belief that every respected man or woman must be in a marriage, again resulted in the third meaning of the same word as 'a marriage'. The same word therefore has ended up acquiring two more meanings in addition to the original meaning. The new meanings have not affected the original meanings in any way.

All the three meanings are used but their meaning can be inferred from their use in different contexts. This can be summarized as below:

- *Inzu yiye ishiri imbiaha.*
House his still new.
'His house is still new.'
- *Inzu yanje ibula omulembe.*
House mine has no peace.
'My family has no peace.'
- *Yanyolere inzu elukulu.*
She got a house in town.
'She got married in town.'

The culture of the Marama speakers has contributed to the shift in meaning of some words. Culturally the Luhya people used to sit around the fire (*omuliro*) in the evenings. They also used the fire as a mode of communication especially if one was lost, he could wait for evenings so as to see where there was a fire and that meant that people were present. When the Marama speakers saw a gun being used to shoot, they felt that it was attracting people's attention just like the fire. They also noted that when the gun was used, it produced smoke just like the fire. In this case they decided to relate the gun to the fire and that is how the meaning of the word *omuliro* shifted to mean 'a gun' in addition to 'the fire'. For example:

- *Liru yebere omuliro.*
'Liru stole a gun'.

Apart from the 'gun' the word *omuliro* in Lumarama has other meanings which the speakers can easily tell according to the context of use. The hearers make use of the contextual assumptions to interpret the speaker's meaning in situations where the word *omuliro* has been used.

The examples below show the different meanings of the word *omuliro*, which have shifted from the original meaning 'fire'.

- *Liru ahafiye omuliro.*
'Liru lit the fire.'
- *Amapwoni kahambire omuliro.*
Potatoes caught fire.
'The potatoes were burnt.'
- *Nyangala yahanga omuliro.*
Nyangala is flickering fire.
'Nyangala is very angry.'
- *Endi mumuliro.*
I am in fire.
'I am in trouble'.

3.1.2 Technological and Civilization Progress

With the accelerated development of human civilization, there appear a growing number of referents, especially as regards newly developed or discovered human artifacts, which are frequently associated with already existing lexical items, especially if their previous referents are no longer present, and the former meanings of such words become obsolete. As Traugot and Dasher (2002:3) put it, the nature of the lexicon is far from immune to reference and it is subject to the changes in the life-styles and the artifacts we are surrounded by.

A representative example of such motivation is the example of the meaning of the Lumarama word *obukhana*, which is widely used by the speakers to refer to ‘a radio’. In the past before the introduction of radios in Maramaland, the word *obukhana* was specifically used to refer to a certain stringed musical instrument. Due to the relationship in the functions of the two, for instance, the musical instrument and a radio, in producing music, the two nowadays bear the same name. With the advanced technology the traditional musical instruments are no longer in use and can therefore be said to be obsolete. In their place, the same word has been transferred to another thing which plays almost the same role but which was discovered later on due to the advancement in technology.

Another example of semantic change caused by technological and civilization progress is in the use of the word *ing’ang’lira* by Marama speakers. The word is presently used to refer to ‘a television’ set because of its ability to show pictures. The word *ing’ang’alira* was formed from *ng’ang’ala* meaning ‘to stare in a surprise’. Initially the word was used to mean ‘a scarecrow’ which was made in the shape of a human being and was usually placed in strategic positions in farms to scare away birds and other animals from eating crops, as they would think that the scarecrow is a person guarding the farm. Before running away, the animals or birds would stare at the scarecrow in surprise.

When the television set was introduced among the Marama speakers, they related it to the features of being stared at and eliciting surprise among the viewers as they could not comprehend how a mere box could show moving pictures. With time, the scarecrows were no longer in use because of the increase in the population which forced people to settle all over making their farms safe. Presently, when Marama speakers talk of *ing’ang’alira*, most likely

they will be referring to the television and not the scarecrow although the original meaning of the word was the ‘scarecrow’.

Traditionally, *olutabo* was a type of food dish made from clay. With the advancement in technology, clay items became obsolete and the word was thereafter used to refer to a bowl. Presently, the same word is commonly used among the Lumarama speakers to refer to the sugar dish which is widely used in households.

In Lumarama, *imingili* referred to anything made from iron which when dropped down would produce a sound. When money was first introduced in Maramaland, it was in form of coins. People discovered that when dropped, the coins would produce a sound like the one heard when iron tools drop or hit against each other. This led to shift in meaning of the word *imingili* to refer to money in the form coins. Presently, the speakers have forgotten about the iron tools as iron smelting no longer exists.

3.1.3 Religion

The introduction of the white man’s religion had some influence on the already existing words in Lumarama. Before the new religion was introduced, the Luhya speakers had their own way of worshipping *were* and had certain words which were specifically used during the moment of worship. However, when Christianity was spread among the Lumarama speakers, they had to fit in by giving names to the new concepts that emerged as a result of the strange religion. Instead of getting new names for the concepts, they simply picked some words from their language which were related to the concept thus resulting in the broadening of the lexemes that were already in use. There also some lexeme whose meanings narrowed down to refer to a religious concept due to the frequent use in religious contexts thus killing the previous meaning.

For example:

Omukambi is 'a person' who passes information from one place to another or even from one person to another'. During the days when there were no telephones or letters used to pass a message from place to place, there were specific people who would be sent to deliver the intended messages. Such a person was called *omukambi*. In the same way, the white man's religion had preachers who spread the word of God to their followers. The word *omukambi* shifted its meaning to refer to 'a preacher', who equals the messengers in the fact that he lets people know more about the bible and the events believed to have happened long ago according to the bible. Although the two meanings are still in use, the shifted one is widely used compared to the original meaning, which is mainly used by the older generation.

In addition, the word *okhwilwatsa* was originally used to mean to talk endlessly or utter so many words. This was before the introduction of Christianity among the speakers of Lumarama. With the sermons delivered by preachers in churches, the people had no otherwise but to devise ways of getting the words that would fit into the prevailing context. They therefore identified words in their language which related to the way sermons were given. This resulted in the broadening of the meaning of the word *okhwilwaatsa*, which also meant 'to preach.' There is a relationship between preaching and uttering many words. A preacher takes time to talk about a given topic and should call for the attention of the audience when delivering a sermon. Similarly, one who speaks a lot must have an audience whose attention is held by the many words he utters.

Religion gave rise to the lexical narrowing of the word *indikano* which was used in the earlier days to mean 'an agreement'. When the bible was introduced in the community, they felt that the holy book contained a message from God to his people on earth. The bible was like a go between

God and human beings. It acted like an agreement in terms of the relationship that exists between God and His people. This resulted in the addition of another meaning to the word *indakano* which is now also used to mean ‘the bible’.

Another example of semantic shift caused by the introduction of religion is in the word *eshiasia* which was first used to refer to ‘a piece of something.’ The same word is today used to mean ‘a verse in the bible.’ The biblical verses are treated as pieces of the writings in the holy book. Although the two words are used to refer to pieces, the context of use is very important as it enables the hearer to correctly interpret the exact piece being referred to hence narrowing of the concept.

3.1.4 Psychological Factors

Semantic changes motivated by psychological factors development are all pervasive and frequently remain unnoticed, as they are generated almost unconsciously by language users, who have been mostly brought up and taught to maintain a good rapport with other members of their speech community. Thus, speakers’ own individualities and sensitivities influence the language they use to facilitate interpersonal and social exchange by taking account of their interlocutors’ idiosyncrasies of the same type. (Grzega, 2004:21)

Grzega (2004) defines taboo as the desire to avoid a specific (growingly stigmatized) designation for a concept with “undesirable” aspects. There are two major taboo oriented motivations of semantic change, that is, taboos of intimate things, which are also called taboos of propriety (e.g. ugly and urinate) and taboos of moral misdeeds, the so-called taboos of delicacy (e.g. evil). Lexical replacements for taboo terms are called taboo-driven euphemisms.

Examples of euphemisms used in Lumarama include;

Okhwisaaba which literary means 'to wash' but the word is used in order to avoid using the word *okhwinyaala* 'urinate' which is seen as a taboo and cannot be openly mentioned especially where there are older people.

The speakers of Lumarama rarely use the exact word that refers to going for a long call of nature. They instead say *okhutsia mubulimo* 'going to the bush'. This is based on the fact that long ago there were no pit latrines and people relieved themselves in the bushes. To date, they still relate the long call of nature with the bushes.

Uluukha which literally translates to 'rest' is used to mean 'die' because people in the Marama community view death as a bad omen which should not be mentioned by its real name.

Another area of great interest of psychologically motivated semantic developments is the synaesthesia. This is a cognitive mechanism when a stimulus to one sense, such as eyesight or smell, is simultaneously perceived by one or more additional sense, e.g. hearing. This phenomenon has given rise to synaesthesia understood as stylistic figure, endowing a given object (entity) with a characteristic which it cannot display, as the object and the characteristic are perceived using different senses. For example:

- *Khamoni alulu.*
Face sour.
'A sour face'.

The utterance could be used to refer to a person who shows an extremely harsh face.

Here the sense of taste is juxtaposed with eyesight. Thus, by a semantic shift or a transfer of a semantic feature, a relation is established between semantically incompatible elements, which denote sensations from different spheres of sensory cognition (cf. Ward and Simner 2003).

As regards the case of *alulu* ‘sour’, there has been a whole array of synaesthetic developments of the senses of the adjective, which seem to have moved a long way from its original sense of “to have a tart or acid taste, such as that which is characteristic of unripe fruits and vinegar; opposed to sweet, and distinguished from bitter” .Throughout the semantic history of the word, the synaesthetic developments have given rise to the following new senses: “having a harsh, morose, or peevish disposition.

The cases of synaesthesia may be considered as instances of metaphor, on grounds of the inseparability of categories, concepts and the ubiquity of the mechanism of human experience embodiment (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999:19). For example:

- *Sakwa ne likondi.*
Sakwa is sheep.
‘Sakwa is a sheep’.

This metaphor presents the inseparable categories (Sakwa and sheep) in terms of their behavior. It therefore shows how foolish Sakwa is just like the sheep.

As regards the astounding pattern of the already mentioned developments, it may be observed that although particular instances of derivation of original meanings may seem surprisingly shiftless, certain regularities in synaesthetic developments are there to be found. (Ullmann ,1964:86).

There are also cases of synaesthetic developments which are much more straightforward.

For example:

- *Amakanda amalafu*
Beans white.
White beans.
- *Omubiri omulafu.*
Body clean.
'A clean body'.
- *Amakhuuwa amalafu.*
Words clean.
'True words'.

-lafu is used in terms of the transfer or mapping of the “spotless, unblemished, unstained” component of the original conceptual domain onto the target domain. The original senses of white is “of the color of milk; fully luminous and devoid of any distinctive hue” it could also mean “colorless, uncolored, as water or other transparent substance” or “blank, not written or printed upon” expanded, to mean truth or genuine. It could also mean enlightened as in:

- *Okhumenya mubulafu.*
To live in the light.
'To be enlightened' or 'to know what is taking place.'

The use of metonymy is another psychological factor that causes semantic shift in a language. Traditionally, metonymy has been defined in the context of broadly understood contiguity in terms of space, time, as part of whole relations or cause-and-effect relations. Metonymy is also said to be establishing connections between entities which co-occur within a given conceptual structure (Ullmann, 1959:231–234)

Thus, it should be stressed that regardless of which of the aforementioned specific concepts is applied, metonymic transfers occur within the same conceptual domain , whereas the contiguity relations connect the elements of a domain one another, as well as its particular elements with

the domain as a whole – which obviously – necessitates encyclopedic knowledge (Taylor ,2003:122–24)

Metonymy allows an efficient reconciliation of two conflicting factors: the need to be accurate, i.e. of being sure that the addressee’s attention is directed to the target; and our natural inclination to think and talk explicitly about those entities that have the greatest cognitive salience for us. Langacker (1993:30)

- *Amakhono amanji kamalire lwangu*
Hands many finished faster.
‘The work was done faster by many people.’

In the above example, *amakhono* ‘hands’ refer to the people who worked. Hands cannot work when not used by their owners.

- *Eminwa eminji chiamalire ebiakhulia.*
Mouths many finished food.
‘The many people ate all the food.’

Eminwa ‘mouths’ refer to the people who ate the food. This shows that there were many people present to eat the food.

3.2 EFFECTS OF SEMANTIC SHIFT

Ullman (1957, 1962) identified four processes that result from semantic shift in a language.

These are:

1. Widening of meaning.
2. Narrowing of meaning.
3. Amelioration.
4. Pejoration.

3.2.1 Widening of Meaning

The meaning of a word becomes more general or more inclusive than its historically earlier meaning as a result of semantic shift. The quantity of the word is therefore raised whenever the meaning is widened. For example:

The meaning of *kona* has widened to mean more than its original meaning. The word initially meant 'to sleep' but with time the meaning included 'ignorance' and presently, the word can also be used to mean 'uncivilized.' The word which originally had only one meaning now has three meanings.

Lia is another word whose meaning has widened to mean more than what it meant earlier. At first the word meant 'eat' which is equivalent to consuming something. Concepts related to the consumption of something were given the same name hence widening the meaning of the word *lia*. It can be used to mean 'to obtain something through lies' as well as 'to squander.'

Another example of a meaning that has become broader is in the word *ibaala*. The word originally meant 'to show or direct' but now it also refers to 'teach.' From the word we have *omwibaali* which refers to either 'one who directs through explanations or 'a teacher.'

Amang'ondo in *Lumarama* originally referred to the ten cents coins. Today, the same word is used to refer generally to money irrespective of the form.

Saaba is a word which used to mean 'wash hands.' It has acquired a new meaning when used metaphorically to replace the taboo word 'urinate.'

3.2.2 Narrowing of Meaning

This occurs when there is loss in the quantity of a word. The meaning of a word becomes less general or less inclusive than its historically earlier meaning. For example:

In *Lumarama* the word *omukati* at first meant ‘anything made from wheat flour’ but now the meaning has been reduced to refer to only one item; ‘bread’. This shows that the meaning has narrowed down to mean less than the original meanings.

When the word *samula* was first used by the Lumarama speakers, it had three different meanings; it meant ‘leave for unknown place’, ‘go on a journey’ or ‘go to work.’ With time, two meanings have been completely forgotten and the word is today used in reference to ‘going to work.’

The meaning *bakala* originally referred to two ideas in relation to openness. The first meaning was ‘to dry in the sun.’ The same word was used to mean ‘say the truth.’ The two meanings were used in the past depending on the context. Today when the word *bakala* is used, the meaning that comes to the mind of the hearer is ‘to dry in the sun.’

Obukusi is a word that was initially used during barter trade. The word however, had two meanings when used in the same context. It could be used to mean ‘the price of something’ or ‘the value of a commodity’ to be exchanged during the trade. With the introduction of money, Marama speakers have narrowed down the two meanings to one, which refers to the price of an item.

3.2.3 Amelioration

This is a result of the raising of the quality in the meaning of a word. The meaning of a word becomes more positive or favorable than the original one. For example:

Inyanya is a *lumarama* word which was borrowed from the Swahili speakers to mean ‘tomato’. Due to the good and appealing color of a ripe tomato, the meaning was shifted to mean ‘a beautiful girl’. The second meaning is more positive compared to the original meaning of the word *inyanya* which only referred to the fruit.

The word *omutiya* was earlier used by the speakers of Lumarama to mean ‘a worker or servant.’ This word was generally used to refer to someone who would be given work to do for somebody else for pay or servants who were kept in households for the sake of working there. Eventually, the word got another meaning basing on today’s social status to point at the working class. *Omutiya* is used presently to refer to the people who are employed and earn a salary hence becoming more positive compared to the former meaning.

There is another word in Lumarama that has acquired a more positive meaning than the former one. This is the word *fwala* which means ‘put on something’, like clothes or shoes. The word has, with time, shifted its meaning to mean ‘dress smartly’. The other meaning that was added sounds more positive as compared to the first meaning because there is emphasis on smartness.

Shiena previously referred to a situation where someone was hounded by the evil spirits to the extent of behaving abnormally. This was a feared occurrence in the society especially if a dead relative died unhappy. *Shiena* has since acquired another meaning which more appreciated by the society unlike the first one. It now refers to persistent begging.

3.2.4 Pejoration

Due to semantic shift in a word, the meaning of a word becomes more negative in its usage. This is as a result of the loss in the quality of the meaning of the word. For example:

The original meaning of the word *kona* is 'to sleep'. Sleep is valued among all human beings irrespective of their culture and origin. This means that basing on the first meaning of this word, there is a positive attachment to sleep. As time went by, the meaning of that went broadened to mean more than sleep. Therefore the same word is presently used to refer to 'laziness.' The additional meaning attached to the word *kona* has shifted from being positive to negative.

Another word whose meaning has shifted from positive to negative is *irukha* which was originally used to mean 'run.' This word has acquired an additional meaning that sounds more negative compared to the earlier meaning. Running is one of the daily activities experienced in the community, but when the second meaning was added, the meaning sounded negative. The word *irukha* is used by the Abamarama to also refer to the mating of animals.

Sebula has its original meaning as 'bid farewell.' This is in the context where someone is leaving and the others wish him well. The word's meaning has shifted from the former one to another meaning related to leaving which is 'to die.' The word is hence used nowadays to refer to both 'bid farewell, and die.' The two meanings are of different magnitude as the second meaning is more negative than the meaning used earlier.

The word *omushiere* was widely used among the *Marama* speakers to praise a young girl especially when coaxing or pleading with her to do something. The same word however; is

presently used differently today with a less pleasant meaning. *Omushiere* now means ‘an old woman or somebody’s wife.

3.3 Conclusion

This chapter highlights the causes and effects of semantic shift in Lumarama as presented through the various examples given. The shift in the meaning of a word in a language may be as a result of differed factors which affect the speakers of a language directly or indirectly. Socio-cultural factors cause semantic shift in a language because we cannot detach people from their culture and social life.

The new things that enter our live through science and technology are bound to lead to additional meanings of existing words as the speakers of a language try to map the old meanings to the new items. Religion has also contributed to meaning shifts as existing words are used to mean more as a way of accommodating the new religious aspects. Lastly semantic shift is triggered by psychological factors which lead to the use of euphemisms and metaphors.

Whenever there is a shift in the meaning of words, certain processes are likely to take place; the meaning of a word may widen to mean more than the original meaning. There may be a case of narrowing of the meaning of the affected word. Amelioration and pejoration are likely to occur. This is where the meaning of a word becomes more positive or negative respectively, than it was originally.

CHAPTER FOUR

TYPES OF LEXICAL PRAGMATIC PROCESSES

4.0 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the data which had been earlier on collected was analyzed. This was done using the lexical pragmatic approach as the selected theory for the study. During the data collection, the researcher was only interested in the words which had undergone a semantic shift in *Lumarama* as the language of study. The data used included words whose meanings had either narrowed or broadened. Therefore, the two processes of lexical pragmatics (lexical narrowing and lexical broadening) were used. Lexical pragmatics is a rapidly developing branch of linguistics that investigates the process by which linguistically specified (literal) word meanings are modified in use.

The process of data collection involved consultations with informants who were competent speakers of Lumarama dialect. The main reason for carrying out the interviews was to enable the collection of data to be used for the study. The collected data would also be important in presenting the views of the speakers of Lumarama towards the semantic shifts present in their language. The oral interviews were conducted on different days during the month of July, 2013.

4.1 DATA ANALYSIS

The consulted informants had the view that many words which have undergone semantic shift have led to the creation of new meanings in the language. The new meanings that were created pose a great challenge to the young people who speak Lumarama because they may not be aware that what they speak today is not the original word that was used earlier. From the results, it is

evident that there is a new version of Lumarama which involves the use of the shifted meanings of the affected words in the language.

The creation of new meanings also involves borrowed words from different languages. A concept is borrowed from a totally different language and brought into Lumarama depending on the speakers' contextual knowledge in relation to the borrowed concept. For example:

The Lumarama word *samanzi* was borrowed from the English word *summons* and naturalized for easy pronunciation. The word is used to refer to a situation where one is required to appear before a council of elders through getting either a written or verbal notice. This case does not mean that the speakers of Lumarama did not have a word to refer to the above mentioned situation. The word which was initially used was *omulango*. Presently, the original word *omulango* is no longer in use. It has been almost completely replaced by the new word which had been borrowed from English. The original word has then shifted its meaning to 'a call' in terms of doing what one enjoys or is talented in.

The use of metaphoric extensions is meant to conceal the content of a conversation. This is in most cases applied by the old people who may wish to communicate without revealing to the other age groups what they are talking about. A metaphor is based on a perceived similarity between distinct objects or actions. From the information collected, the respondents suggested that the meanings of some Lumarama words have been extended through metaphors. For example:

Omusiani uno ne likondi.

Boy this is sheep.
'This boy is a sheep.'

The utterance refers to the boy as being a sheep which is actually impossible for a human being to assume the form of a sheep. In the interpretation of the utterance, the hearer begins by highlighting the encyclopedic knowledge of 'sheep'. The information given about the word is that:

1. It is an animal.
2. It is domesticated.
3. It cannot reason on its own.
4. It is believed to be foolish.

From the different encyclopedic entries, the hearer selects one that relates to a human being and that becomes the meaning implied by the word 'sheep'. Therefore the word has been used metaphorically to mean that the boy is foolish as a characteristic of a sheep and not that he is literally a sheep.

The data that was collected was later on analyzed using the lexical pragmatic approach. The two major processes of lexical pragmatic theory were used during the analysis. The two processes are: lexical narrowing and lexical broadening.

4.1.1 Lexical Narrowing

Lexical narrowing is the process through which the meaning of a word changes from a super ordinate level to a subordinate level. Here the meaning of a word becomes less general or less inclusive than its historically earlier meaning. Narrowing is typically treated as a case of I-implicature, governed by an informativeness principle, "what is expressed simply is stereotypically exemplified and analyzed using default rules".(Horn 1984, 2000; Levinson 2000; Blutner 1998, 2002).

For example:

The word *omunyu* was widely used among the *Marama* speakers to refer to different types of salts. Later on, the same word was extended to mean ‘broth’ for instance, the watery substance which is found in cooked vegetables, meat or fish. With time the meaning of the word *omunyu* narrowed down to refer to the latter as commonly heard in the speaker’s utterances. Therefore when the *Marama* speakers use the word *omunyu* in their utterances, the context will always insinuate that they are referring to the broth found in vegetables, meat or fish. This can be seen in the following examples:

- *Metakho omunyu.*
Add me soup.

During mealtime, when a person uses the above utterance the people around will understand that he is most likely asking for soup. This will happen despite the fact that the same utterance may mean ‘add me some salt’. The hearers will choose on the former meaning because lexical narrowing has shifted the meaning of the word *omunyu* to be mostly associated with soup.

Another example is the use of the word *obutunduli* to mean ‘pleasure’. The word was used to refer to the pleasure felt when someone is engaged in an activity that he enjoys. The same word was also used to refer to the pleasure derived from eating bone marrow. This means that the word was initially used to refer to the pleasure derived from either eating bone marrow or enjoying an activity. However; as time passed by, the meaning of *obutunduli* was narrowed to mean ‘pleasure’. For example:

- *Ekhuliranga obutunduli.*
I am feeling pleasure.

The utterance may be applicable when the person who is being referred to has engaged in activity that makes him happy. The speakers' contextual knowledge in relation to the word *obutunduli* paints the picture of an activity that makes one happy.

The word *eshilulu* can be narrowed down to refer to a specific meaning depending on the context in which it has been mentioned. The word has a number of meanings in Lumarama but the hearer is still capable of giving the right interpretation using context. For example:

- *Abalwani balire eshilulu.*
'The fighters took an oath.'
- *Omusala kuno ni omululu.*
'This drug is bitter.'
- *Imbwa yanje ne indulu.*
'My dog is fierce.'
- *Omukhono kufunisha ni omululu.*
'The broken hand is painful.'

The word has been used to display the different meanings as seen in the utterances above. The same word is used to refer to an oath, bitter taste, fierce or harsh and it also means pain. When the same word is used in a variety of contexts like the ones presented above, the hearer applies his contextual knowledge to understand that the speaker refers to one aspect and not the other despite the fact that the aspects are pointed using the same word.

4.1.2 Lexical Broadening

According to Campbell (1998:267), the term broadening is used in reference to a type of widening of meaning which results from a generalization from the specific case to a class of which the specific case is a member. Campbell noted that earlier works of semantic change was

not totally without generalization. He notes that a word starts out with an original meaning, then acquires additional multiple meanings.

Lexical broadening is therefore the process in which the meaning of a word becomes more general or more inclusive than its historically earlier form. Here a word is used to convey a more general sense than the encoded one. This means that what a word refers to increases in terms of a variety of meanings.

The word *eshirima*, meaning ‘darkness,’ conveys more than the encoded sense. Assumptions about the concept ‘darkness’ that one cannot see anything around may be transferred to anything that makes it impossible for one to see around or know what is going on around him.. Therefore, the meaning of *eshirima* has been broadened to mean ‘ignorance’.

For example, consider the following context:

- *Auma: Abacheni nibetse lina?*
Visitors coming when?
‘When are the visitors coming?’
- *Were: Abacheni shina?*
Visitors which?
‘Which visitors?’
- *Auma: Shomanyire tawe?*
You know not?
‘Are you not aware?’
- *Were: Esie endi mushirima.*
Me am in darkness.
‘I am ignorant about it.’

Basing on the context of the above utterances, we can easily get the meaning of the word *eshirima* as meaning something different though related to darkness.

When the word *nyira* was first used in Lumarama, it meant ‘to be cold’. The meaning has slowly shifted with time to mean other things in addition to the first meaning which is still in use. *Nyira* also means ‘to faint’ as seen when someone becomes unconscious. The same word is used to refer to ‘being quiet’, which can be understood in two ways; we can talk of a person who is not talking or a room where there is no noise. *Nyira* means something I cold and it can also be used to point at a person who has fainted.

4.1.3 Approximation

This is often treated as a case of pragmatic vagueness which involves different contextually determined standards of precision. (Lewis, 1979; Lasersohn,1999)

In approximations, for instance, a word with a relatively strict sense is extended to a range of items which fall just outside its linguistically-specified denotation. Loose uses of round numbers, geometric terms and negatively –defined terms show good examples of approximations.

For example:

- *Injira ino yakololokha.*
Road this is straight.
‘This road is straight.’

The above utterance contains the word ‘straight’ which refers to a road that has no bends. Looking at the context we approximate that the road being mentioned is straight due to the fact that it has no visible corners. In real sense, there is no way a road can be straight even if it lacks

corners. The utterance is thus a very good example of approximation as we look at the road and feel that it qualifies to be a straight one.

Another example of approximation is seen in the utterance below;

- *Eshiiro shili hambu awefu.*
Market is near home.
'The market is near our home'.

In the above utterance, the context shows the distance between the market and home, although we are not given the exact distance. When different hearers are exposed to the utterance above, their understanding of the word 'near' will be totally different. This will depend on their individual approximation of the meaning of near. To some, 'near' may mean 'less than ten kilometers', others will think about less than five kilometers, while some will understand the meaning of the same word in terms of a distance of below a kilometer. This means that when talking about the word 'near', the speaker approximates the meaning of that word.

4.1.4 Category Extensions

In this process the name of a salient category member is extended to apply to the whole broader category to which it belongs. Category extension is typified by the use of salient brand names to denote a broader category including items from less salient brands. Wilson (2003:4). For example:

- *Tsingubo tsimali muno tsifuyirungwa omo.*
Clothes dirty very are washed omo.
'Very dirty clothes should be washed using omo.'

The speaker is understood as not specifically referring to a certain brand of washing powder, but to any washing powder available. The hearer who interprets this utterance applies her contextual

knowledge in relation to dirty clothes whereby it is believed that washing powders clean better than other soaps. This enables the hearer to understand the fact that the soap being referred to is not a specific brand of washing powders but any washing powder that could be found at the shops.

Among the speakers of Lumarama, it is believed that any margarine especially that which is smeared on bread is *blueband*. This came as a result of a brand name for margarine manufactured by a certain company. The product was used for a long time in the community before another type of margarine was introduced until people associated the name *blueband* with margarine. To them, any margarine is *blueband* irrespective of the company or any other brand name given. The Marama people therefore when asked for *blueband* will avail any type of margarine they come across.

Colgate is another name used to refer to all toothpastes. This was a brand name used for so long in the community that people tend to relate the name with the product. In this case, even if similar products with different names are introduced to the people, they may find it difficult to adjust to the new names and feel more comfortable to refer to the new products using the name they know. This has finally led to the use of the name *Colgate* to mean all toothpastes.

4.1.5 Metaphoric Extensions

This is a type of semantic change in which a word or phrase literary denoting one idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness between them. Metaphorical change usually involves a word with a concrete meaning taking on a more abstract sense, although the word's original meaning is not lost.

For example:

- *Ayuma: witsire lwangu muno.*
'You have come very fast.'
- *Kundu: Nditsire mulinyonyi.*
'I have come in a bird.'

The word bird encodes the concept BIRD. Our encyclopedic knowledge of birds includes the information that they can move from one place to another through the air. In interpreting the utterance above, the hearer uses this concept with its encyclopedic knowledge as a starting point for constructing a hypothesis about the concept the speaker wants to express, and the implications the speaker wants to convey. Therefore, the word 'bird' has been used metaphorically to refer to an aircraft relating to the ability of the two to move from one place to another in the air.

Metaphors can be used in the social context to comment on one's behavior in relation to something else. For example:

- *Oli imbwa.*
You are a dog.

When interpreting this utterance, the context is very crucial because two meanings are likely to crop up according to Lumarama interpretation. The hearer begins by considering the encyclopedic entries for the word dog as an animal, it barks, domesticated, can be a nuisance when hungry, can be fierce to strangers, mates shamelessly in public. Of the contextual knowledge that one has about a dog, he identifies those which can be exhibited by human beings. This leads to the conclusion that the word dog is used to refer to a person who leads a promiscuous life or restless when he sees food.

4.1.6 Hyperbole

This involves the use of exaggeration but is not meant to be taken literally. Hyperbole is a radical type of broadening which allows the communicated concept to depart further from the encoded concept. Metaphor is normally seen as involving blatant violation of a pragmatic maxim of truthfulness with resulting implicature (Grice, 1975; Levinson, 1983). For example:

- *Tsinzekho tsilafunaka tsimbafu.*
'Laughter will break my ribs.'

When interpreting the utterance, the word 'break' is seen to encode the concept BREAK. The hearer is required to employ her encyclopedic knowledge of what is to break which includes the knowledge that anything which is broken is left in pieces. The hearer then uses the concept BREAK with its associated encyclopedic knowledge as a starting point for constructing a hypothesis about the concept the speaker wants to express and the implications she wants it to convey. Having derived enough implications to satisfy her expectations, she stops at that level. Thus the utterance is understood as claiming not that the speaker's ribs will literally break but that she falls into the broader category of physical or mental states which share with BREAKING. Therefore, the concept communicated is broader than the concept encoded.

When someone has been purchasing items on credit and ends up realizing that he owes a lot of money to the seller, he can express the situation by saying:

- *Amakobi kalanzira.*
Debts will kill me.

The utterance is intended to emphasize the magnitude of the debt and not the fact that the debt will kill him. In real sense, however big the debt, no one can die as a result of non-payment. The speaker has exaggerated the point that the debt is so big that it may end up killing him.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

5.0 INTRODUCTION

The aim of carrying out the study was to prove that some Lumarama words have undergone the process of semantic shift. This has been presented through the various examples of words cited as being in existence as a result of semantic shift. The two broad categories of semantic shift (lexical narrowing and lexical broadening) were used in citing the examples of words which have been affected by a shift in their meaning.

During the study, lexical pragmatic theory was used in the analysis of the data. The theory was used in order to justify that its various processes are responsible for the shift in meaning of the affected Lumarama lexemes. The data which was used in the study was collected and discussed using the lexical pragmatic approach which proved to be very adequate in the analysis of the data.

5.1 Findings

The Lumarama lexemes which have undergone a shift in their meaning are as a result of lexical narrowing and lexical broadening. The two lexical pragmatic processes are therefore seen to be the main motivators of semantic shift in Lumarama as a dialect of the Luhya language. From the study, the following observations were made:

- (a) When using language, background information is needed to interpret the meaning of an utterance. The background information is represented in the form of concepts that are

stored in the mind and it must be uniform to both the speakers and the hearers in order to enable the hearers to reach the intended speaker's meaning.

- (b) In trying to comprehend an utterance, the hearer constructs *ad hoc* concepts using contextual assumptions which are derived from the encyclopedic entries of existing concepts with different denotations.
- (c) A number of words were found to have changed in terms of their meanings while maintaining their original forms. The change in the meaning of a word does not necessarily mean that the former meaning ceases to be in use, especially when the word undergoes lexical broadening. This occurs when the meaning of a word widens to become more general thus resulting in more meanings in addition to the original meaning.

The study was based on three hypotheses, namely:

- (a) Semantic changes in Lumarama are in the area of science and technology, and context plays an important role in determining the denoted idea.
- (b) The semantic in Lumarama lexemes are caused by socio-cultural forces such as the exposure of Abamarama to other languages, and new scientific ideas.
- (c) The semantic changes in word meaning results in ambiguity in word or sentence meaning.

From the hypotheses, it was found that:

- (a) The semantic changes which have occurred in Lumarama are not only evident in the area of science and technology, but are also visible in other areas surrounding the speakers of the language. The education sector has been affected by the shift in the meaning of the

words used due to the fact that new concepts are incorporated into the syllabus from time to time. This forces the learners to adopt the new concepts and make them part of their language by giving the concept another meaning which is familiar to them. Semantic shift has not spared the language used by social and age groups in the community. The old people use words with the original meanings whereas the young people use words with the shifted meanings although some are aware of the original meaning of the words they are using.

- (b) The semantic changes in Lumarama are caused by a number of factors. Socio-cultural forces trigger semantic changes of words when people come together and use words which are relevant in their social life. The new ideas and artifacts that enter the society through technology and civilization necessitate semantic shifts to suit their existence. Culture is also another cause of semantic change as people have to accommodate new words in the language in relation to their culture. The people's religion and psychological factors also lead to semantic shifts in Lumarama.
- (c) The semantic changes in word meaning result in ambiguity in word or sentence meaning when the original meaning is retained. Two meanings came up whenever the word or sentence with the shifted meaning is used. In this case, the hearer makes use of contextual knowledge to disambiguate the utterance in order to arrive at the speaker's intended meaning.

5.2 Recommendations

When the meaning of a word changes, the result is a word which is likely to denote more than one sense hence giving rise to either lexical or structural ambiguity. There is a possibility that the meaning of a word may shift thus facing out the original meaning of the affected word which

may no longer be in use in the language again. In the study, attention has been given to the words whose meanings have shifted but the old meanings have still been maintained.

A study should therefore be carried out to establish whether there are words whose original meanings are no longer in use after the occurrence of semantic shift in preference to the new meanings. This will be helpful in determining whether Lumarama, as a dialect of the Luhya language, exhibits cases of extinction of some words which were originally used and the factors that led to the death of those words.

5.3 Conclusion

The lexical pragmatic approach is suitable to analyze semantic shift in Lumarama lexemes. The study shows that context is very important for the interpretation of the meaning of a word which has been affected by semantic shift. The contextual knowledge of the hearer enables him to differentiate the various meanings of a word and eventually settle on the speaker's intended meaning.

The types of semantic shifts present in Lumarama are narrowing and broadening. The two varieties lead to change in the meaning of a word from general to specific and widening of the meaning of a word so that the meaning becomes more general, respectively.

Different factors cause semantic shifts in Lumarama which include human factors, physical environment and psychological factors. Semantic shift has some effects on the affected words in a language. The meaning of the words will become more specific or general depending on the type of semantic shift that affected the word. The new meaning can also become more positive or negative compared to the original meaning of the word.

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APPENDICES

Appendix one

Sample questions asked during the interview.

1. How do you rate yourself in terms of your competence in Lumarama as a language?
2. As a speaker of Lumarama, do you think that the words used in the language today hold the same meanings as those that were referred to in the earlier days? Give reasons for your answer.
3. With the change in the meanings of the words used in the language, do you think that the affected words maintain the two meanings, or the new ones are adapted at the expense of the old ones which may have been forgotten?
4. Give examples of words in Lumarama whose meanings have shifted.
5. Identify some of the causes of the changes in the meanings of words in Lumarama.
6. Do the changes in the meanings of the affected words have any impact on the speakers of the language? Mention the impacts.
7. Can the two versions of meanings be used satisfactorily in addressing people of different ages and status?
8. Of the two meanings (the original and the shifted) which ones do you prefer to use when speaking and why?

Appendix two
Semantic shifts in Lumarama

Words whose meanings have narrowed

Word	Original meanings	Present meaning
Nywa	Drink a liquid Take alcohol	Take alcohol
Omukati	All foodstuffs made from wheat flour	Bread
Bakala	Dry in the sun Expose the truth	Dry in the sun
Samula	Travel Go to work	Go to work
Omunyu	Salts Broth	Broth
Obutunduli	Bone marrow Pleasure	Pleasure
Obukusi	Price Value	Price

Words whose meanings have broadened

Word	Original meaning	New meanings
Chama	To like	Like Accept Be happy
Ikhala	To sit	Sit Assemble Take long
Saya	Plead	Plead Pray
okhwisaaba	Wash hands	Wash hands Urinate
Inzu	House	House Marriage Family
Obukhana	Stringed musical instrument	Stringed musical instruments Radio
Nyira	Become cold	Become cold Be quiet Faint Wet

Eshiyayo	Goat	Goat Sheep Cattle
Amang'ondo	Ten cents coin	All forms of money
Omutoka	A type of ancient cars	All vehicles
Saamba	Burn	Burn Hurt
Oluusi	Thread	Thread News
Omuliro	Fire	Fire Gun Trouble Anger
Eshirima	Darkness	Darkness Ignorance
Indakano	Agreement	Agreement Bible
Eshiasia	A piece	A piece Bible verse
Uluukha	Rest	Rest Die
-lulu	Bitter	Bitter

		Harsh Oath
-lafu	White	White Clean Truth Light
Kona	Sleep	Sleep Ignorant
Lia	Eat	Eat Con Squander
Ibaala	Direct	Direct Teach

Words whose meanings have totally shifted

Word	Original meaning	New meaning
Ing'ang'alira	Scarecrow	Television
Olutaabo	Clay bowl	Sugar dish
Imingili	A piece of iron material	Coins
Omukambi	Messenger	Pastor
Okhwilwaatsa	Talk much	Preach