

THE SEMANTIC DISTINCTIVENESS OF KENYAN  
ENGLISH

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of  
the requirements for the  
degree of Master of Arts in Linguistics.

BY

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# DECLARATION

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



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**ATICHI A. REGINALD**

**This thesis has been submitted for examination with our approval as its supervisors.**



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**DR. ALFRED BUREGEYA**



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**MR. MAURICE J. RAGUTU**

## DEDICATION

*In permanent memory of my beloved  
mother,*

*The late ROSELINE ALATI ATICHI.*

*Mum,*

*You energized my resolve,*

*You illumined my path.*

*Thanks for those steadfast selfless*

*Ceaseless sacrifices,*

*Rest in peace-*

*Red ROSE.*

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My special thanks to go to my wife, Florence and daughter Glenbyrne for understanding the reason for my absence. My late mother, Roseline, invigorated my spirit. Sadly she passed on when the product was about to be delivered. My brother Benson Alati for his generosity and kindness.

Joy Ayuma, Akinyi Onjala and Munyite Samuel all of Kenyatta University had the work typed. Dr. Schroeder, Caro Mulinya, Josiah Atsetse (Tripha Girls) and Madam Maureen (Limuru Girls) facilitated the administration of the questionnaire. The members of the MA I 2004/2005 class were kind to answer my questionnaire.

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Messrs Mukabana and Odero of Chavakali High School cheered me on.

To all of you and others,  
No thanks however elaborate,  
No rewards however magnificent,  
No words however poetic,  
Can express my indebtedness to you. God bless you abundantly.

## ABSTRACT

This study entitled, "The semantic distinctiveness of Kenyan English," looked at the divergences of the meanings of words in Kenyan English. These meanings were gauged from the Standard International English. Meanings entered in International English dictionaries. The meanings of the words in Kenyan English were accounted for within the lexico-semantic dynamism and Stern's seven classes of meaning change. The processes of meaning change and the factors that cause them are also discussed.

The study targeted Kenyan speakers of English with post-secondary education, and who have either had or are in the process of undertaking university education. These are speakers who are expected to exhibit high standards of proficiency in Standard International English. Forty-one of such speakers were the respondents to the questionnaire specially designed to determine the acceptance level of the Kenyan English meanings. A total of fifty – four words were selected and several meanings, including at least a Kenyan English meaning and a standard International English meaning, provided for each word. The standard International English (StdIntE) meanings were picked from the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 6th Edition (2001)* and the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English 3rd Edition (1995)*. These meanings were counter-checked from the multi-volume *Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd edition (1989)*.

The respondents to the questionnaire were required to mark a tick (✓) against the meanings that were familiar or acceptable to them. The number of 'ticks' for each meaning were counted and expressed as a percentage. The higher the percentage, therefore the higher the acceptability level for the KenE meaning.

From the study, there are words with high acceptability levels (70% and above) of the Kenyan English meanings to the extent that less than 20 per cent of the respondents marked acceptability of their StdIntE meanings. This is the group of words that have acquired altered meanings in KenE. There is another category of words whose KenE meanings are used together the StdIntE ones. The acceptability percentages of the KenE and StdIntE meanings of these words do not vary a great deal. The third group comprises words that have acquired distinct KenE forms through morphological rules of the English language and given KenE meanings. Comparative acceptability percentages for this group are not provided because the words have not yet been absorbed into StdIntE. The final category of words consists of words borrowed from the local languages and integrated into English. The findings of the study reveal that the meanings of words are bound to have a recognizable character that is distinct to the Kenyan English variety

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# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 BACKGROUND TO MEANING IN KENYAN ENGLISH

As non-native speakers of English in a multilingual setting, Kenyans allow the intrusion of other languages into its system, mainly to capture the unique experiences, circumstances and events that are associated with Kenya. Apart from the Standard English lexicon, the lexicon level of Kenya English consists of other categories of words. There are words that have been borrowed from the indigenous languages of Kenya and incorporated into English with their original or altered meanings. Words in this category include: baraza, shuka, Ugali, askari and Jembe.

The second group is made up of words from the standard international English lexicon, whose meanings have been altered to accommodate expanded meanings and usage. The verb "by-pass" means "to go around or avoid a place" according to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, sixth edition (2001)*, hereafter abbreviated as (OALD). In Kenyan English (KenE), it has been altered with an additional meaning of "to avoid a person".

The word "retrench", whose use will be discussed in detail in chapter three, is a verb with a dictionary meaning of "to arrange to spend less, cut costs" according to the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English 3<sup>d</sup> edition (1995)* hereafter abbreviated as LDCE.

In the Kenyan sense, the word means "due for retirement and against their wish". This meaning comes out in the sentence: "the worsening economic inflation has forced the government to retrench over twenty thousand of its workforce."



Standard international English (StdIntE) sense has narrowed from the sense of "cutting or reducing expenses" to that of "laying off workers".

Buregeya (2001:1) gives the word "to learn" as having acquired the additional meaning of "to have a class; to study."

According to OALD, 'a schoolmate' means a friend who attends or attended the same schools as you. " In KenE, a 'schoolmate is anybody, not necessarily a friend, who attends or attended the same school as you."

There is another category of words that are not independent entries in the standard " world" dictionaries of English, but have found their way into Kenyan usage through word formation. Morphological processes are applied into English words through derivation, inflection and combinations because certain words, on their own do not capture the situation and feelings of Kenyans adequately. The words "bride-price" and "co-wife", cited by Skandera (2003:159), are combinations that reflect unique cultural practices among Kenyan communities.

Some words have StdIntE meanings that are unfamiliar to Kenyan speakers of English. This could be due to the fact that such unknown senses of the words are least or never used in Kenya, either because their referents are alien to Kenyans or that their strange senses were not learnt when the word was first encountered by KenE speakers.

The word "provost", for example, is mostly used in Kenya with the StdIntE meaning of "the head of a group of presets belonging to a particular

cathedral" (OALD). The other two meanings are (i) the person in charge of college or some university (ii) a senior member of the administrative staff at some universities. These meanings have been relegated or remain unknown to KenE speakers.

Our study focuses on these semantic divergences that are distinct to Kenyan English. Our inspiration has been spurred by the latest work on Kenyan English by Skandera (2003). Skandera extensively examines the Kenyan idiom that forms part of the character of KenE. Whereas Skandera's study is based on the idiom, we look at words in the English lexicon whose meanings carry a Kenyan "colouring" that deviates from the StdIntE meanings.

## **1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM**

Standard British English (BrE) is the variety that is used for formal instruction in the Kenyan school system and taught as a subject as formulated by the Kenya Institute of Education English Curriculum. With time the examining body (KNEC) has come to recognise Standard American English (AmE), and its spelling and semantic systems have come to be considered alongside the BrE ones. While striving to attain the desired levels of proficiency, the educated speakers of English in Kenya, and who are the models of competence, use lexical items in a manner that sometimes deviates from the standard varieties in terms of meaning. Vocabulary, as contained in dictionaries, is assigned extended or altered semantic sense and even new lexical items coined. Some of the semantic deviations and expansions are known to the 'educated'

speakers (speakers of English who have been exposed to the language up to higher levels of education); such speakers still consider their usage as falling within the acceptable Standard International English (the Standard British and American) varieties, hereafter referred to as StdIntE. Our research therefore seeks to investigate how the realignment of meaning in English as used in Kenya reflects the peculiar socio-cultural needs of the Kenyan situation. Variations capture language as an 'organism' evolving through dynamic innovation. The StdIntE senses of word meaning do not cater for the peculiar diverse systems of interaction among its widespread speech communities. As long as the meanings play communicative functions among speakers of the Kenyan English through social language contracts the meanings cannot be stigmatized or condemned. They become part of the distinct character of that variety, functioning fully as any other variety would.

### **1.3 THE RATIONALE**

Several linguists have discussed the Kenyan English variety at the phonological, semantic and syntactic level of description. Within the semantic level, most language users are well familiar with the loan words - words that are borrowed from the local languages and integrated in English. Extensive studies have not been carried out on the meanings of words within English, which have expanded or altered meanings in their Kenyan usage. The most recent work, Skandera (2003), focuses on the meaning and usage of idioms in Kenyan English. We have chosen to concentrate on the meaning of

individual words and believe that this will enrich research on the Kenyan English variety.

This study also seeks to show that the additional or altered meanings in Kenyan English do not occur arbitrarily, but that they go through a systematic process of meaning change, in order to serve a functional purpose within the Kenyan setting. Since some vocabulary elements in the Kenyan English variety capture unique Kenyan circumstances, there is need to accommodate the Kenyan senses in the teaching and learning of the English vocabulary in the school system. In any case, the purpose of teaching language is to enable the users to communicate within their immediate environment and beyond. This study could provide the impetus for the compilation of a "Kenyan English Dictionary." Ultimately, we argue that the Kenyan semantic varieties could be accommodated within the Kenyan English Syllabus without compromising the standards of the standard varieties.

#### **1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

Our study focuses on the semantic distinctiveness of Kenyan English. Its specific objectives are:

- i. To identify the lexical items in Kenyan English with expanded to altered meanings with regard to Standard International English.
- ii. Describe the semantic divergences of Kenyan English from the standard International English (BrE and AmE).

- iii. Discuss the processes of English meaning change within Stern's seven classes of sense change with regard to Kenyan English.
- iv. Discuss the factors responsible for meaning change in KenE.

## **1.5 HYPOTHESES**

The following are the hypotheses of our study:

- I. Lexical items in Standard International English acquire additional or altered meanings in Kenyan English.
- II. The semantic divergences of KenE from the StdIntE result from the processes of meaning change.
- III. The processes of meaning change stated in (ii) fall within Stern's seven classes of sense change.

## **1.6 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS**

The study is about the semantics of the Kenyan English variety. The study has identified the meanings attached to lexical items with a Kenyan sense, and noted the variances of such meanings from the Standard International English. It has categorised the lexical items into three: words with different meanings in KenE, and ones whose meanings derive from morphological processes.

Loan words are a fairly familiar category to the linguists and speakers of Kenyan English. This category of words is merely mentioned in this study insofar as it forms part of the semantic component of Kenyan English.

It would be impossible to cover meaning without touching on context. The functionality of meaning accrues from the context, linguistic or otherwise, of the elements. In other words, words are deliberately used to give specific meanings –denotative, associative or emotive meanings in discourse. They do not have a semantic life of their own; they will be considered along situational or sentential contexts.

Kenyan English is replete with neologisms, which are yet to stabilise and be accommodated within the variety. Such forms, which arise from the emerging communication technology trends, are mentioned in the final chapter. The study has also accounted for the divergences in meaning by discussing the processes of meaning change using Stern's seven classes of sense-change. The factors that influence meaning change in second language varieties are discussed.

The study has not ventured into structural semantics of which Fodor (1977:64) says, "meanings of both lexical items and larger constituents are regarded as concepts, analyzable into simpler atomic concepts, which are regarded as SEMANTIC MARKERS AND DISTINGUISHERS". We have only considered meanings of words in terms of senses in which they are defined in Standard International English dictionaries.

Based on a sample of English lexemes, the study discusses the semantic status of words with data collected from responses to the questionnaire.

## 1.7 LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature on Kenyan English is still scarce. A number of linguists have however come up with material on the variety. Our reviews look at works on the theory that this study adopts and those that are relevant to KenE.

Stern (1931) discusses meaning change of words in English. The book particularly examines the processes through which the meanings of lexemes evolve and puts the processes into seven classes of meaning change. This study adopts these insights in looking at meaning change in regard to Kenyan English.

Hocking (1974) discusses the errors in the English used in East Africa. His prescriptive approach is based on observation, having been an expatriate English teacher in Kenya. Hocking's work is, however, not based on any data. The book does not recognise the existence of regional varieties such as Kenyan English and treats any deviation from the standard British English variety as "errors".

Okombo (1987) in his lecture notes prepared for the external undergraduate students covers the phonological syntactic and semantic aspects. Apart from covering all the facets of Kenyan English, Okombo's work is not based on research data. It is also not formulated along Stern's seven classes of meanings change that this study seeks to adopt.

Malmkjer (1991) discusses semantic change under historical linguistics. They take the view that language systems are ever changing to reflect the socio-cultural circumstances that confront the speakers of the language over a

period of time. This view is pertinent to our study that looks at changes in meaning of words in regard to the Kenyan English speech community.

Schmied (1991) cover variations in forms of English in Africa as a whole. He discusses the levels of pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and meaning. He has devoted a subsection on such forms used in the East Africa region: lexical Africanisms in East African English. The present study zeroes in on those forms in Kenya especially.

Buregeya (2001) gives some of the words that have been assigned additional meaning in Kenyan English. The paper is concerned with the morphological and syntactic features of Kenyan English, but deviates a little into the semantics of Kenyan English.

Skandera (2003) examines idiom in Kenya English. He discusses the semantic features of the idiomatic expressions that are distinct to KenE in relation to their Standard international English meaning. His discussion is based on responses of KenE speakers to various test instruments –elicitation, preference and substitution.

## **1.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:**

### **The lexico-semantic dynamism and Stern's seven classes of meaning change**

Lexico-semantic dynamism is chosen because this study dwells on meanings, and the changes in the meanings of such words.



The set of words of a language, like all its other systems of analysis, is bound to change. The model we adopt in this study takes the view that innovations and modifications are evident both in the forms of words of a language and their attendant meanings. The changes in the words reflect the speaker – phenomena interaction within a speech community. Malmkjer (1991:206) says that:

Words may be added or lost in conjunction with cultural changes. The many hundreds of words that once dealt with astrology when the art of divination based on the stars and their supposed influence on human affairs was more in vogue have largely disappeared from the world's languages, while large numbers of new words related to technological developments are constantly revitalizing their vocabularies.

Stern (1931:165) looks at change in meaning from the perspective of "sense-change" with regard to "the psychic processes involved." He contends that a change in the meaning of a word alters the mental representations of that word. Such psychological propositions are, however, not satisfactorily quantifiable due to what Stern (1931:168) observes as "the fact that they are founded on inadequate analysis of the nature of meaning and insufficient linguistic material". Although Stern (1931) examines sense change of lexemes intra-linguistically (within the English language), his "seven classes of sense change" nevertheless, serve as an appropriate model to explicate meaning change processes in second language varieties as well. We

therefore use these seven classes of meaning change to discuss meaning alterations in KenE. Below are the classes into which the model falls:

**(i) Substitution**

In this process changes in meaning are triggered by external, non-linguistic factors. One word takes many meanings to reflect the expanded reference, necessitated by technological and cultural factors. In Kenya, the word "Matatu" (a public service vehicle) has absorbed the referent of one other type of such vehicles called "Nissans", so that Kenyan English speakers do not just talk of boarding a "Matatu," but specify it as a 'Nissan', Mini-bus or bus.

**(ii) Analogy**

Analogy results from a word 'absorbing' senses of the meaning from another word that is close to it in form and meaning. The word 'pastoralist', which is not an entry in the world dictionaries I have used in this study, has been formed from the entry "pastoral" and analogously given the meaning "one who survives on livestock farming: feeds sheep, goats, cattle on pasture for survival".

**(iii) Shortening**

This third process involves parts of or whole words being omitted from an expression. In StdIntE, the ladies' room (toilet), loses the noun 'room', and its semantic content transferred to the adjective 'ladies'.

The word "ladies" adopts nominal features and becomes "the ladies" as in "Take me to the ladies."

#### **(iv) Transfer**

Transfer of meaning arises from a noticeable similarity between the known referent of the word and another plausible referent. The word "beetle", which means a kind of insect with hard wing covering (LDCE), has gone through a transfer of meaning due to the appearance of the referent. It also means a type of small German car made by the Volkswagen Company." This 'car' meaning of 'beetle' through transfer of meaning is, however, not restricted to Kenyan English only.

#### **(v) Nomination**

The nomination of meaning captures the human creativity of language use in selecting words that appropriately serve a specific purpose. Nomination is intentionally used to communicate the feelings of interlocutors towards the referent or subject matter. The word 'Wanjiku', still a 'seasonal' word during the period of the effort towards a new constitution in Kenya, is used to mean "the ordinary, rural citizen." In this context, it is not just a proper noun, but a 'word' with a connotative meaning.

### **(vi) Adequation**

Adequation occurs when the characteristics of an object give rise to its meaning. An example is 'bicycle', whose characteristics enable it to function as a taxi vehicle. It is therefore given the KenE meaning of 'a bicycle-taxi' – a "bicycle that is hired to carry people at a fee."

### **(vii) Permutation**

In meaning permutation, the action that goes with the word comes to be associated with its meaning. The verb 'to bounce', for example, is associated with something that hits a surface or sways from one point to another. The action has given rise to the KenE meaning of the word: "to fail to get somebody or something at an agreed upon place".

Apart from the Stern's model, our framework spans both the historical linguistics and socio-linguistic domains. We take the view that the current meanings of some words are divergent from their earlier meanings. Muthiani (1987:46) gives an example of the word "butcher" which meant 'goat slaughterer' but changed to its current meaning: 'the killer of any animal whose meat can be legally accepted for sale or human consumption.' The word "enjoy", which means 'to get pleasure from something' as defined in the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (OALD)* has expanded to mean 'not to be committed, reliable, to take one for granted or give one a raw deal.' In other words, lexemes are dynamic both in form and meaning.

In addition, change in the meaning of words or utterances accrues from the totality of their contribution in maintaining specific patterns of life in the society in which speakers of a language or variety live, and the speakers' interpersonal relationships within the cultural set up. To add a 'human character' to the status of meaning, therefore, we put Stern's model in the broader perspective of *participant phenomena* interaction. People in a speech community influence the development of a language, including its semantic system, through their interactions with the world around them.

Our model therefore begins with a historical view that the meaning of words is dynamic and then systematizes the dynamism within Stern's model of seven classes of sense-change. Finally, it postulates that the changes stem from the use of the language by a group of speakers in a speech community, in this study, Kenyan English.

## **1.9 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research looks at meanings of words as used by speakers of Kenyan English, against the Standard English meaning.

### **1.9.1 Subjects**

The study relies on language as used by "the educated" Kenyan speaker of English, who are looked at as the models of proficiency in Standard English.

These are Kenyans who have acquired post-secondary school education. A total of forty-one respondents were selected through convenient sampling.

They comprised my postgraduate classmates, other postgraduate students,

lecturers, undergraduate students at the Kenyatta and Nairobi Universities and teachers in two schools around Nairobi (Tripha and Limuru Girls)

### **1.9.2 Materials**

The material for our data was collected from the *Daily Nation*, *Sunday Nation*, *East African Standard* and *East African Sunday Standard* newspapers. We have used Standard International Dictionaries to get the meanings of the sample words used in the study. The dictionaries used are: *The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 6<sup>th</sup> Edition* (2001) and *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English 3rd edition* (1995). Although these are the main dictionaries used, other dictionaries such as the multi-volume *Oxford English Dictionary 2<sup>nd</sup> edition* (1989) have been referred to.

The questionnaire was used to determine the acceptability of the Kenyan meanings for each word a Kenyan meaning was given together with at least one standard international English meaning. The respondents were required to mark a 'tick' against the meanings they were familiar with.

### **1.9.3 The Procedure**

A sample of fifty- four words was gathered from newspapers and ordinary conversations. I noted the Kenyan meanings and how these differ from the Standard International English (StdIntE) meanings ones. The StdIntE meanings are taken to be the definitions of the words as entered in the International dictionaries cited in the "Materials" sub-section above.

We then devised a questionnaire based on the KenE meanings of the fifty-four words. Three meanings, including a StdIntE meaning and KenE meaning of each word, were provided and a total of forty-one subjects, hereafter referred to as respondents, asked to tick (✓) against whichever meanings of each word were acceptable or familiar to them.

To avoid the respondents referring to their dictionaries or discussing, the questionnaires were administered under supervision.

The number of 'ticks' for every KenE and StdIntE of the word were then tallied and totalled. The bigger the number of respondents who marked a 'tick' against a specific meaning, the higher the level of acceptability of the meaning. The acceptability of the meanings is expressed in percentages. Ultimately, a table showing the acceptability of the KenE meanings is provided. The findings are reprinted in detail in chapter three.

## CHAPTER TWO:

### MEANING CHANGE IN SECOND LANGUAGE VARIETIES OF ENGLISH

This chapter discusses the issues of meaning in relation to words and how words evolve to adopt a Kenyan English character. Since the study concerns itself with Kenyan English as a variety, we shall discuss language variation and then briefly make observations on the international standard varieties that are the reference target models against which the Kenyan English variety is evaluated.

#### 2.1 WORD AND MEANING

A word is a definite linguistic unit "orthographically (in writing) bound on either side by space, or phonologically (in speech) by a pause, and can be interpreted into meaning by virtue of semantic content" Crystal (1991:380). Meaning is however not a preserve of what linguists traditionally call words; smaller units than words are known to carry meaning. For example, the genitive ending in the word "children" signifies possession, and yet it does not fit into the definition of a word stated above. Our concern is not the meaning of such units on their own, except when they have a bearing on the meaning of the words in which they appear. In this study, combinations of more than one word that semantically and lexically function as single words will be considered as words. In this new era of communication technology, for example, the word "scratch-card" (combination of words), according to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 6<sup>th</sup> edition (2001)* means "a card that you buy and has an area that you scratch off to find out if you have won



some money or prize." The word has acquired a totally different meaning in Kenyan usage and sense. In Kenyan English it means, "a card that you buy and which has an area that you scratch off in order to subscribe to a telephone operator to be able to communicate."

Words such as 'scratch-card', as signs and symbols, are the means by which language users name, "denote or designate the material world they interact with, and represent or express their thoughts and mental content". Stern (1931:30). They are the basis upon which larger linguistic units (phrases, clauses, sentences and texts) are interpreted and analysed. Linguists have, however, pointed out that analyzing and interpreting the meaning of sentences goes beyond merely doing the same to words. Fowler (1974:43) observes that:

The lexical items may quite plausibly be seen as conveying primitive 'blocks' of meaning, but the meaning of a sentence is more than an ordered heap of building material; it is a construct which takes much of its semantic shape from compositional relationships which are external to mere words.

One therefore requires the linguistic competence, which is attributed to the speech community of a variety, to make out the meaning of the lexical items from the semantic structure of the whole language. According to Stern (1931:68), "isolated words do not merely mean syntactically isolated as a word functioning as a sentence (fire!), but a word that has really no context, external or psychic, for instance the words in a dictionary." Although we are

concerned with physically isolated words, we shall, in dealing with the meaning of words in Kenyan English, guard against what Ullmann in Fowler (1974:49) calls "an atomistic view of language, in which each word would be regarded as an isolated and self-contained unit". This is largely because we cannot explain the meaning of a word without relying on its relationship with other words. For example, the meaning of the word 'saved' has several meanings. It is a verb, which means that someone has been rescued or assisted from a difficult or dangerous situation as in: - "I was going to fail, but your notes saved me"

In Kenyan English (KenE), "to be saved" means:

"To be born a gain and converted to evangelical Christianity."

The meaning of such polysemous lexemes can only be inferred from the context. Clearly then, the meanings of some words accrue from circumstances outside the formal structure of linguistic units; these circumstances and elements of context and thought are not part of meaning, but they significantly influence its status. Words, thus, do not occur in isolation in discourse, for they fall into larger thought and expressive processes.

The status of meaning is investigated by different groups of scholars using varied approaches, and for varied purposes. Whereas philosophers view meaning in terms of logic and truth conditions of propositions in languages, linguists deal with the denotative and connotative senses of words, and with meaning in terms of the semantic relations between words in a language.

Stern (1931:14) says of the definition of a word in relation to meaning:

{

The meaning of a word in actual speech is identical with those elements of the user's (speaker's or hearer's) subjective apprehension of the referent denoted by a word, which is apprehended as expressed by it.

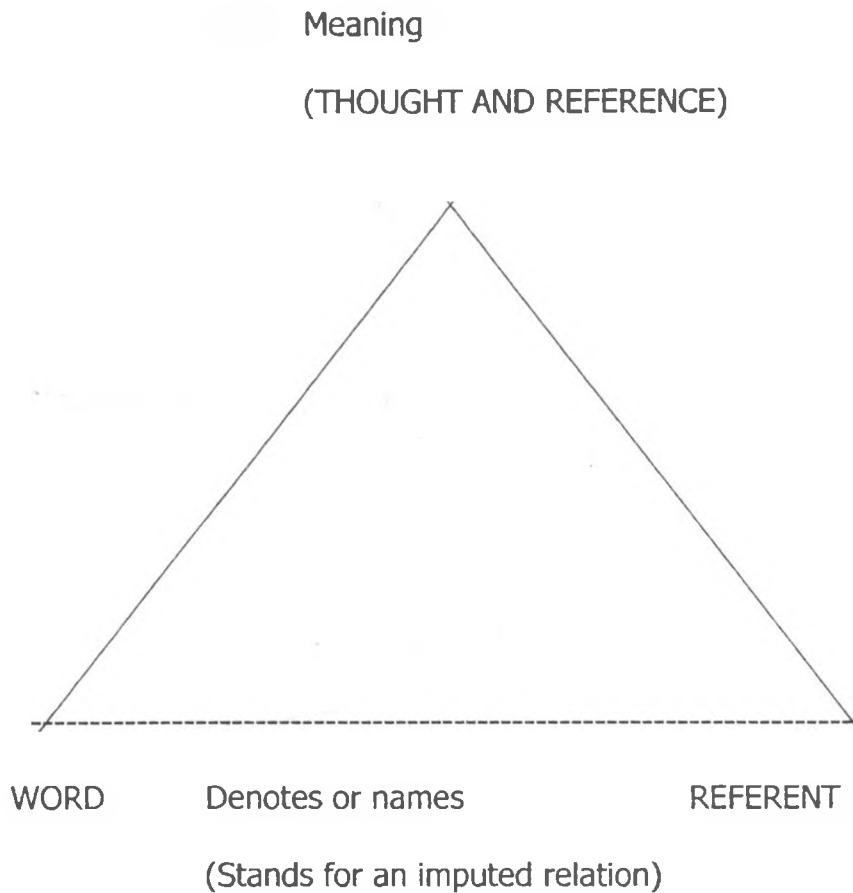
Several theories have been postulated to explicate the meaning of linguistic units such as words. Ferdinand De Saussure viewed elements of meaning, in our case words, as signs with intertwined levels. "The signifiant" is an "abstract psychological representation of the phonetic level of a word, while the 'signifie,' "is an abstract psychological representation of some of the subjects of human discourse" Fowler (1974:50). Signification as a concept of meaning does not adequately account for the meaning structure in natural languages. Simply matching 'the signifier' with its 'signified' without reference to other terms in the lexicon does not enable us to get the full meaning of words. For example, to express the meaning of the word 'matatu' (a local name for a motor vehicle used in public transport in Kenya) to a non-kenyan speaker of English, one would be compelled to show the 'signified' by the ostensive method of pointing at the object, a practice that would be futile, especially in an environment where such an objects are not available. In any case "the signified- the object, cannot be equated to the meaning of the words" Malmjer (1991:205).

Another view held by linguists regarding meaning is that the meanings of words are the things that the words "stand for". This referential theory of

meaning looks at the functioning of words in terms of their capability to refer to things and experiences in the world. Stern (1931:31) regards the referent as "that which is denoted by a word, anything concrete or abstract, that is capable of being made the topic of formulated thought and speech." The referential theory, just like signification, has its shortcomings. Fodor (1977:14) says that "the meaning of an expression, for example, the 'apple', has often seemed to be something abstract, obscure, mysterious." There is a difference between the meaning of a word and what the word refers to. The conceptual referent of the word 'safari', cited by Schmied (1991:78), has no relationship with its associative meaning in the Kenyan sense – "any trip or journey made from one point to another, usually by road, air or rail."

It is entered in the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 6<sup>th</sup> edition (2001)* with the definition: "a trip through wild country, especially, East or Central Africa, hunting or photographing animals", which is not exactly the same as the Kenyan English meaning. The referent of the word 'Matatu' (the object in the world that stands for the word) can be driven, boarded, bought, sold or involved in an accident; the same would not apply to the meaning of the word. To add to that, the theory does not account for the meaning of abstractions which do not have 'existent' objects as referents. Such words as 'hibernate', 'hunger', 'the' (a definite article) and 'war' do not refer to objects and yet we cannot brand them meaningless.

To delineate meaning, the proponents of this theory use "the triangle of reference" first advanced by Ogden and Richards (1923) with slight modifications. The triangle below, reproduced by Stern (1931:37), shows the interrelation of three factors: thought or meaning, word and referent. These are part of his definition of the meaning of a word stated earlier.



NOTE: The terms in brackets are from Ogden-Richards (1923: 14)

From the triangle, the relationship between the word or symbol is an arbitrary one, seen from the dotted line at the base. It is indeed this 'loose' and arbitrary link between words and their referents that enables speakers of a

language variety to assign any meaning to a word as long as conventionality and contract of use within the speech community are observed.

The requisite conventionality for the link between words and referents to plausibly provide meaning is reflected at the apex of the triangle thought and reference. The meaning of the word "street-girl" in Kenyan English as " a female child who has run from home and lives on the streets" arises not from the word-referent connection, but from the communally shared knowledge. It is the subjective rather than the objective apprehension that mediates between the word and its referent. In fact, the Standard International English (StdIntE) meaning of the word is, " a prostitute who stands or walks about in the street to attract customers; a street-walker," a meaning that remains out of frequent use in Kenyan English because of the communally shared knowledge relating to it.

To cater for the inadequacies of the referential and signification theories of meaning, linguists have come up with the notion of SENSE in meaning.

Philosopher Gottlob Frege cited in Fodor (1977:14) distinguishes between sense and reference by pointing out that co-referential expressions do not necessarily have the same meaning. He uses the phrases " the morning star" and " the evening star" which have the same referent, that is, the planet venus, but do not share a meaning. Thus, in addition to the reference (what is designated by an expression) of a word, we must consider the sense (the way the individual expression is structured in relation to the words) carried by the linguistic unit. The place occupied by the expression or word such as " to

pocket”, under scrutiny in Kenyan English, in the entire lexicon of language therefore becomes important in delineating its meaning. The verb “to pocket” has the following senses of meaning:

- I. To put into one’s pocket.
- II. To have total control or influence over somebody’s decisions and behaviour.
- III. To take or keep money dishonestly.

We are concerned with discussing the meaning of words in regard to the sense in which they are used within the speech community of the Kenyan English variety.

All the three senses of the word are used, except that the second one, selected by 51 per cent of KenE speakers who were chosen as respondents in this study, is peculiar to Kenyan speakers of English. The other two sense are accepted in the Standard International English varieties. The importance of SENSE is underscored by Fowler (1974:50) who says that “.....Vocabulary competence can be represented by knowledge of senses. The sense of any word is an internal property of language structure.” Sense, therefore arises from the conventionally and communally shared perception that the speech community has towards the word in question.

## **2.2 COMPONENTS OF MEANING**

A word has a complex of components of meanings that are crucial to its functions in a network of communication. Rommetveit in Mey (1974:138) states that there are three processes that are realized when the meaning of a

word is processed: the referential, the associative and the emotive components of meaning. We briefly discuss each component below.

### **2.2.1 The referential component**

The referential component realizes a representation of what the word refers to. For effective communication to occur, such a representation must be clear to both the speaker and the hearer.

The word "turn-boy" in the Kenyan sense refers to " a man who is in charge of a public service vehicle in business transaction." 'Turn-boy' has nothing to do with age, so that, even adults in Kenyan English are referred to as "turn-boys".

### **2.2.2. The associative component**

The aspect has to do with the picture that a word brings to the mind of the interlocutors. The word 'black-out', cited by Skandera (2003:132), is associated with darkness or drunkenness that leads to loss of consciousness. The associations are activated by the word utterance even without contextual cues. The verb "to seduce" is associated with "persuasive discourse with somebody with an intent to have sex." This associative meaning is so dominant in Kenya that another standard international English meaning remains unfamiliar to many Kenyan speakers. The verb also means:

To persuade somebody to do something that he would not usually agree to do, by making it seem very attractive, for example, "The promise of huge profits seduced him into parting with his money."



### 2.2.3 The emotive component

The emotive component also entails the evaluative meaning. This aspect of meaning is concerned with the feelings or emotions that a word elicits. The emotive component is attitudinal in its inclination, so that a single word will generate varied emotions depending on the attitudes of the speakers towards the discourse subject. The word "lady" has several meanings in standard international English. Among these meanings are (i) a woman of good manners and behaviour of high social position and (ii) a woman of noble rank. The same word, also cited by Skandera (2003:126), is substituted for "any woman" in Kenya.

Indeed, 29 out of 41 respondents (seventy per cent) in our study accepted the usage of "lady" in the sense of "any woman" as in "I gave the book to that silly lady." It is not uncommon to hear KenE speakers portray a woman in the negative light but still refer to her as "a lady." While we do not want to speculate about the reason for this yet, it is worth noting that connotations of approval or disapproval are an important facet in the emotive component of meaning.

The three processes of word meaning discussed above tend to interact in creating a specific focus in the communication event. The verb "to tune" in StdIntE means "to adjust a musical instrument, engine or radio as desired," but it is informally used in KenE to mean "to talk to a member of the opposite sex in order to woo her or him; to seduce." Whichever sense of the word is activated will largely depend on the participant relationships, the

situation, the intention of the speaker and a network of other social factors. In the Kenyan sense, a technician will not use the word "tune" with the same intention and effect as a poet. The latter will probably value the emotive realm in order to bring out the aesthetic quality of the word, while the former will be interested in the referential, denotative weight of the word. The associative bit will project the pictures of a radio, a member of the opposite sex (depending on the user) and the seductive language.

### **2.3 CHANGE IN MEANING**

Semantic changes in our study are discussed within the principles of language change in English used as a second language. Language change is "constantly occurring in all languages and in all varieties of a language with the result that older and newer varieties always co-exist" Quirk, et.al (1985:32). These changes are bound to occur at all levels of linguistics analysis. Werth, cited in Jones (1974:377), views semantic change as arising when a word with meaning A comes to have meaning B (which may or may not be related to meaning A). Words in a language "change their meanings and content to fit into the ever-changing combinations and contexts" Malmkjer (1991:208). Modifications occur in the vocabulary both in the stock of words (lexical change) and their meanings (semantic change).

Every language has the natural capacity to 'name' phenomena and control the senses in which the new lexical items are used in relation to the senses of the other already existing words. With time, the new words achieve semantic stability and conform to the rules of the language. Change in meaning

therefore encompasses "a habitual modification among a comparatively large number of speakers, of the traditional semantic range of a word" Stern (1931:163).

In other words, a new meaning of a word used momentarily (or temporarily) by a relatively small number of speakers bears no importance to a linguist who is investigating meaning change. The change in meaning must inevitably stabilize through extensive use and acceptance, which leads to the word acquiring its semantic range. In the emerging political dispensation in Kenya, the word "summit" was 'carved' to refer to the party leaders who came together to reach a political decision in view of an impending general election. The word was picked up by the media and has since been used to refer to not only party leaders but also other politicians representing party interests. The sense in which the word is used in KenE deviates from that of the standard international English: "an official meeting or series of meetings between the leaders of two or more governments at which they discuss important matters" (OALD). Once such variances are entrenched within the language system of the speech community, they become part of the semantic features of the variety.

Labov, quoted in Wardhaugh (1998:207), observes that change is systematic and that "trying to understand these kinds of systematic changes and how individuals participate in them" is key in the study of meaning. Malmkjer (1991:206) contends that changes in the meanings of words in natural languages broadly fall into three principles: semantic shifts, semantic

expansions and narrowing. The most prominent pattern in Kenyan English is the semantic shift, where words acquire totally different meanings from the ones that are internationally recognized. For instance, the meaning of the verb "to off-set" is entered in *the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English 3rd Edition (1995)*, hereafter abbreviated as (LDCE), as "to compensate for something: balance something," as in the sentence: "He increased his prices to off-set the rising cost of materials." But only 5 out of the 41 respondents (12 per cent) concurred with this StdIntE sense of the word. The fact that the word has acquired a semantic shift in KenE is corroborated by the outcome of our research, in which 35 out of the 41 respondents (85 per cent) accepted the meaning: "to clear debts," as in the sentence: "I am planning to off-set the hospital bill by the end of the month."

Semantic expansions entail words being given additional meanings by users of a language or variety. The verb "to tarmac" in KenE has acquired an additional sense of "to look for employment or job, especially after completing studies." The meaning of "to backslide" which means "to lapse from good ways into one's former bad ways of living," as in "The reformed criminal backslid," has narrowed to "the act of a born again Christian or convert going back to sinful ways." Clearly, the word is now commonly used within the circles of evangelisation. 34 out of 41 (83 per cent) respondents accepted this KenE meaning, while 23 (56 percent) preferred the StdIntE meaning. These aspects of meaning variances and deviations are discussed in detail with supportive illustrations in chapter three.

## 2.4 THE KENYAN ENGLISH VARIETY

Variation in English emanates from the fact that its speakers are vastly scattered and expansively separated socially and geographically. Writing about variation in the English Language in Africa, Schmied (1991:46) notes that "its Africanness is very elusive and any supposed homogeneity far from the reality of the African situation." Most Kenyans, like other Africans, use English as a second language besides indigenous languages. As the non-native speakers of English interact within a wider linguistic ecology, there emerges a variety of the language that reflects and serves the socio-cultural needs of the speech community. Such an emerging variety as Kenyan English is however expected to be as close as possible to the internationally recognized varieties, lest it becomes a totally different language. Variation of any kind must, thus, not stand in the way of international intelligibility.

Hocking (1974:234), while discussing some of the mistakes made by non-native speakers of English in East Africa, long recognized the fact that regional varieties were bound to spring up and develop. He says: "the combination in 'hot soup' does not exist, although this is no doubt just the kind of thing that may in time come to form part of East African English." He thus admits that deviations from "correct" English could be entrenched within a variety so that they form part of its distinctive character. Our study therefore considers such deviations from the standard international English found within the Kenyan English variety at the level of meaning. This is the variety that educated Kenyans use for communication mostly in formal and

official situations. Since our study targets meaning in Kenyan English in relation to the standard models, it is prudent that we briefly discuss the standard models recognized in Kenya: the British and American standard English varieties.

## **2.5 MEANING IN THE STANDARD ENGLISH MODELS**

Any variety of English is internally adequate and sufficient enough to serve the communicative needs of its speakers at all levels. Such variation must not, however, as pointed out in 2.4 above, compromise international intelligibility. According to Quirk, et al. (1985:18), "the standard variety of a language is that which is widely used in formal writing, communication media, school texts, literature materials, and whose grammar is developed and the lexicon documented in international dictionaries".

Due to historical factors, the British English variety is the standard model in Kenya. It is the model that is used for formal instruction in the school curriculum and which 'the educated' are expected to use with a high degree of proficiency in official, technical, scientific and professional communication. The American variety has gained remarkable ground in Kenya, and presently functions alongside the British variety. Within the two varieties there exist differences which, nevertheless, do not make them unintelligible between each other. At the vocabulary and meaning levels, the varieties sometimes use different words for the same referents. For example 'petrol' in British English is referred to as 'gas' in American English. What is known by the

word 'a lift' in British English is 'an elevator' in American English. The word 'majorly', which is discussed in a later chapter in this study, is marked 'American' and informally used to mean 'very, extremely'. Some words in the English lexicon have gained meanings that are different from the meanings recognized by the standard models. The word 'majorly' for example means 'mainly' in Kenyan English. These deviations and differences do not make any of varieties 'less correct' in relation to the others.

In the next chapter, we look at the status of the meaning of a number of words in Kenyan English.

## **CHAPTER THREE:**

### **KENYAN ENGLISH MEANINGS AND THEIR RATE OF ACCEPTANCE BY KENYAN ENGLISH USERS**

Semantic manifestations of Kenyan English covered in this chapter fall under four categories. The first category consists of words whose Standard International English (stdIntE) senses have been replaced with different meanings in KenE. The word 'scratch card', also discussed in section 2.1, has a KenE meaning: "a card with an area that is scratched to enable mobile phone subscribers to make calls." This is different from the stdIntE meaning, which is, "a card that you buy and has an area that is scratched off to find out if you have won some money or prize"(OALD). The second group comprises words that have additional KenE meanings that are used by KenE speakers alongside the Standard International English ones. An example is the verb "to bounce" whose stdIntE meaning of "being returned as worthless" (LDCE) is used together with another KenE meaning of "failing to get somebody or something as expected." Next is the category of words that get into the KenE 'lexicon' through word formation. For example, the compound noun "bicycle taxi" is specifically formed to denote a kind of bicycle that serves the same purpose as a taxi vehicle. We shall discuss this word in detail in a later section. The fourth group is made up of words borrowed from the indigenous language of Kenyan communities, but are now integrated into KenE. The words in this group include "Jembe", "harambee" and "shamba". This last category is not the concern of this study, but we will briefly discuss it because



it forms part of the semantic character of KenE. A table showing the rate of acceptance of the Kenyan meaning will also be provided in this chapter.

### **3.1 ENGLISH WORDS WITH ALTERED MEANINGS IN KENYAN ENGLISH**

As indicated above, several entries have lost their standard International English meanings in Kenyan English. The KenE meanings deviate from the definitions entered in standard international English dictionaries. These KenE meanings have been so firmly entrenched into the KenE semantic system that the speakers of KenE get the representations of these acquired meanings without any contextual cues. We illustrate such meanings using the following words: docket, retrench, to avail, to surcharge, severally, crusade, dame, rhyme, interdict.

The word 'docket' in Kenyan English is taken to mean: 'the portfolio or jurisdiction of an official, especially of government' as in 'prisons fall under the docket of the Minister for Home Affairs.' The StdIntE meaning, which has nothing to do with portfolio, is 'a list or piece of paper describing the contents of something, giving information about its use' – *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (1995)*. The connection between the two meanings possibly lies in the fact that an official upon his appointment assumes his position, which has 'a label' of specific duties to be performed. The job description associated with the portfolio notion in KenE meaning of 'docket' is closer to the sense of 'a paper describing the content of

something', which is the StdIntE meaning. Thirty-eight out of forty one respondents (93 per cent) accepted the KenE meaning.

The verb 'to retrench' has also gone through the same process. In StdIntE, it means "(of government or business), to arrange to spend less or cut costs" (LDCE). This has been altered in KenE to mean "(of government, firm or organization) to lay off workers against their wish and before they are due for retirement." Notably, the sense of 'cutting costs' has been narrowed to 'laying off workers' in KenE. 39 out of 41 respondents (95per cent) accepted the KenE meaning, while only 3 (7 per cent) of them preferred the stdIntE meaning. The semantic alteration affects the grammatical features of the word, so that it takes a direct object in KenE. It is therefore used as a transitive verb in KenE as shown in the sentence:

The Kenyan Railways has shelved plans to retrench over six hundred of its workforce. (*Daily Nation, June 3, 2003, pg. 4*)

KenE, through the natural morphological process, to be discussed in the next section, has formed the noun 'retrenchee' from the verb 'retrench', and given it the meaning 'the person who is retrenched.' 'Retrenchee' is not yet an entry in the Standard International English dictionaries referred to so far.

The verb 'to avail' has changed in meaning. In KenE, it means: 'to make something available; present something or oneself; able to be heard, seen, obtained or used', as in 'All students should avail their receipts for scrutiny.' This KenE meaning was 'ticked' (marked for acceptance) by 36 out of the 41

respondents, which represented 88 per cent acceptance. The StdIntE meaning is 'to make good or profitable use' (LDCE), as in the sentence 'I availed myself of this opportunity to improve my English.' Only 6 respondents (15 per cent) preferred this meaning. One respondent indicated that 'avail' on its own has no meaning unless one combines it with 'make' and changes the form of the word 'avail', so that it becomes 'make available.' The KenE meaning is possibly traced from the similarity in form between the adjective 'available' and the verb 'to avail', with the latter receiving the meaning of the former.

'To surcharge' in StdIntE means 'to demand payment in addition to the usual charge' (LDCE) as in: 'The tourists were surcharged 10 per cent on the price of the holiday because of the unexpected rise in air fare.' Only six out of forty-one respondents (15 per cent) accepted this StdIntE meaning. The sense of one paying additional amounts has been changed in KenE to the effect that what is due to one will be withheld. The KenE meaning selected by twenty-nine out of forty-one respondents (71 per cent) reads as: 'to deduct or withhold a part of money or benefits that an individual or group is entitled to' as in the sentence below:

Examiners must return to the relevant authorities at the marking centres all the property issued in their names before they leave the centres; failure to do so may lead to their being surcharged. (*Extracted from the Kenya National Examination Council invitation letter to Examiners November 2002, pg 4*).

One can speculate that the alteration in meaning arises from the element "sur" appearing before "charge". If 'charge' means, "to ask for an amount of money for goods and services", KenE speakers possibly assume that 'surcharge' means 'to charge one by retaining one's entitlement.' 'Sur' seems to mean 'withhold' in this case.

The adverb 'severally' in stdIntE means 'separately; differently' (LDCE) as in 'shall we consider these issues severally or all together?' Only four of the forty-one (10 per cent) respondents selected this sense of the adverb. A whopping thirty-nine (95 per cent) respondents concurred with the KenE meaning, "more than a few but not very many, " as in "I have severally told you not to touch the radio." Since the adjective "several" is closer to the adverb "severally" in form, KenE speakers possibly project the meaning of the latter from that of the former. The meanings of the two words are different in stdIntE.

The StdIntE definitions of 'crusade' are:

Any Christian war to win back Palestine from the Muslims in the 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries (LCDE).

A long and determined effort to achieve something that you believe to be right or to stop something that you believe to be wrong. (OALD).

Only six (15 per cent) of the respondents accepted the first StdintE sense of the meaning that was given on the questionnaire. Two respondents indicated

meanings that they felt were correct, though not provided on the questionnaire. The two meanings they gave were:

- (i) An activity in support of any good cause for people's rights – women's rights against rape, or gender discrimination.
- (ii) A concerted effort that goes against unacceptable government policies or occurrences in the society.

The two senses are, however, covered by the meanings provided on the questionnaire. All the forty-one (100 per cent) respondents accepted the KenE: 'a Christian public worship session that is not limited to members of their sect only' as in the sentence: 'My attending the crusade gave me hope.' The KenE meaning carries an element of the StdIntE meaning of 'a Christian war' and not that of 'to win Palestine from the Muslims.' The associative KenE meaning of the word 'crusade' is that Christians are at war with the devil or sin. Secondly, through evangelical 'crusades' Christians are out to 'win' more people from sin and other religions to Christendom.

The word 'dame' is defined in StdIntE as 'the title of a woman who has been given British rank of honour equal to that of a Knight' (LDCE). The second meaning, though dated means: 'the pantomime woman' (LDCE). The first meaning was accepted by five (12 per cent) respondents. The old-fashioned, informal sense of the word as 'any woman' was favoured by four (10 per cent) respondents. One respondent indicated that the word means 'an old woman' and another one felt that the word means 'an old unmarried female.' The KenE meaning was accepted by thirty-seven (90 per cent) respondents.

Interestingly, most of the respondents doubted whether the word is part of the StdIntE lexicon, and argued that it is part of the 'sheng' code, commonly associated with the Kenyan youth. It is therefore likely that the meaning of 'dame' has changed because it is extensively used by the Kenyan teenagers to refer to a 'young female.'

The word 'rhyme' has acquired the KenE meanings that are different from the StdIntE ones. The first meaning is given to the word as an adjective and it reads: 'of things that look alike' as in the sentence: 'Their shirts rhyme in colour.' As a verb, 'to rhyme' means 'to get along with somebody; be friendly to somebody' as in 'I don't rhyme with my maths teacher.' The meanings were accepted by twenty-six (63 per cent) and twenty-eight (68 per cent) respondents respectively. The StdIntE meaning, associated with the literary world of poetry, as 'words that have the same sounds' was indicated by only one respondent. Not even the teachers of English, whose area includes poetry, gave the correct StdIntE meaning. The StdIntE meaning of 'rhyme' – 'words with the same sounds' could have influenced the KenE meanings in the sense that 'the same sounds' is close to 'things that look alike' or 'people who hold the same opinions, mannerism, and therefore do get along.'

The word 'interdict' appears in StdIntE only as a noun. Its meanings are:

Law or order from a court of law that orders one not to do something (OALD).

(In the Roman Catholic Church) an order forbidding somebody to take

part in church services (OALD).

The two meanings were accepted by six (15 per cent) and five (12 per cent) respondents respectively. 'Interdict' has been accommodated into the verb class in KenE with the meaning, 'to stop or prevent somebody for a while from discharging duties that go with his or her position, job or employment in order to investigate suspected or alleged misconduct.' Forty out of forty-one respondents approved this meaning. This represents 98 per cent acceptance. The word has therefore not only taken a new word class, but also acquired a slightly different meaning from the noun form meaning in StdIntE. See an example in the sentence below:

Six primary school head teachers in Embu were interdicted in a crackdown on those suspected to have misused the free primary education funds (*Daily Nation, June 12 2004, pg.6*)

### **3.2 WORDS WITH ADDED MEANINGS IN KENE.**

This section illustrates words that appear in the StdIntE lexicon, but have acquired additional KenE meanings. The KenE speakers use both the StdIntE and KenE meanings depending on pragmatic (usage) considerations. The pragmatic issues that infiltrate the semantic domain of words include the shared background knowledge (cultural, professional or social) among the speakers and the assumptions against which the words take the intended meanings. In other words, these issues are extraneous to the linguistic units, but do remarkably influence the semantics of words.

'Otherwise' is used in StdIntE with the following meanings:

{

- i) As an adverb 'a part from that' as in 'we were late, but otherwise the journey was enjoyable' (LDCE).
- ii) As a connector, 'what the result would be if something did not happen or if the situation were different' as in 'They took the next train, otherwise they would have been late for the meeting' (OALD).
- iii) As an adverb 'in a different way to the way mentioned' as in 'Margaret Thatcher, otherwise known as the iron lady is visiting Africa soon' (OALD).

The KenE meaning given to the word is, 'an alternative, another option' as in 'we'll rely on our school bus because we have no otherwise.' This meaning was approved by thirty-four (83 per cent) respondents. The first StdIntE meaning that was included on the questionnaire was selected by twenty-five respondents who represented 61 per cent acceptance. Whereas the word is used as an adverb and connector in StdIntE, it changes its grammatical class to a noun in the KenE meaning. In KenE, it is often preceded by a determiner 'no.' From our data, the KenE meaning of the word has a higher rate of acceptability than the StdIntE meanings. This could have resulted from meaning substitution, where the meaning of a word expands its reference. 'Apart from that' in StdIntE is taken to be close to the KenE sense 'an alternative.'

The verb 'to clear' has several meanings that are used alongside the KenE meaning. In KenE, the word has the meaning, 'to complete, finish up or be through with an exercise, task or process' as in: 'He has cleared his university



studies.' This meaning was accepted by forty respondents (98 per cent acceptance). Another meaning that is thought to be a KenE meaning: 'to kill or murder' was accepted by only eight respondents. The KenE meaning, 'to complete or finish' is possibly transferred from the StdIntE sense of "taking something out of one's way." To clear a task in KenE, in this regard, possibly originates from " the act of taking it out of one's mind by having it done."

The verb "to bounce" in stdIntE has several meanings among which "(of a cheque) to be returned by a bank as worthless" (LCDE). This option was selected by thirty out of forty-one respondents (73 per cent). The KenE meaning, " to fail to get somebody or something at an agreed upon place and time," was acceptable to thirty-five (85 per cent) respondents. The two meanings are therefore both applicable in KenE, and their use determined by the context of usage. The KenE meaning may have arisen from something, for example a ball, that bounces without "settling" instantly. One who "bounces" therefore does not remain in a particular place but moves away when his venture fails, possibly to try later.

One of the StdIntE meanings of 'to land' is 'to secure a job or position' (LDCE) as in 'she landed the top job in the company.' The added KenE meaning is 'to arrive, reach a place', as in, 'when we landed home, the guests were just leaving.' The StdIntE meaning was accepted by twenty-five out of the forty-one (61 per cent) respondents, while the KenE sense was selected by thirty-eight respondents, which represents 93 per cent acceptability. The KenE

meaning is an extension of another StdIntE sense of the word – ‘to arrive somewhere in a plane or boat.’ In KenE, the verb ‘to land’ is used even when a plane or boat has not been used as a means of transport. This is a case of meaning substitution, which could have resulted from the fact that planes or boats are not a common means of transport by most Kenyans.

In StIntE, the verb ‘to escort’ means ‘to go or travel with someone or something as a guard or as a show of honour’ (LDCE) as used in ‘A group of motor cyclists escorted the presidential limousine.’ This meaning was acceptable to twenty-eight (68 per cent) respondents. The word is generally used in KenE to mean, ‘to accompany a friend, visitor or a courteous gesture of sending off a visitor or guest.’ This socially expanded meaning of the verb was accepted by thirty-nine out of the forty-one respondents (95 per cent).

‘Upcoming’ is an adjective with the StdIntE meaning, ‘about, going, likely to happen soon’ (OALD) as in the sentence: ‘The upcoming elections will be free and fair.’ The KenE meaning of the word that was accepted by thirty-five (85 per cent) respondents is, ‘with a promising future, signs showing likely success or popularity in future’, as in, ‘Jane is an upcoming athlete.’ The current StdIntE meaning of the word was accepted by eighteen (44 per cent) respondents.

In the StdIntE, the word with the meaning definition that KenE has given to ‘upcoming’ is another adjective ‘up and coming’, which most KenE speakers do not seem to be familiar with.

The verb 'to criss-cross' in StdIntE means 'to make a pattern or lines crossing each other on a parcel of land' (OALD) as in, 'The city is criss-crossed with canals.' This has acquired an additional meaning in KenE: 'to move extensively to different parts in order to gather information, campaign, educate the public, propagate an ideology or policy', as in the sentence:

The opposition MPs have been accused of criss-crossing the Rift-Valley province, inciting members of the public against the government (*Daily Nation, December 19, 2003, Page 4*).

The KenE meaning was selected by twenty-nine (71 per cent) respondents, while its StdIntE meaning was acceptable to twenty-one (51 per cent) respondents. The crossing of lines is closely associated with the purposeful movement of people from one point to another.

'To hibernate' is used in StdIntE to mean '(of animals) to be or go into a state like a long sleep during the winter' (LDCE). Thirty-one (76 per cent) respondents 'ticked' on this meaning. A Kenyan meaning added to the word and selected by twenty-eight (68 per cent) respondents is 'to be away from the public in order to rest, to be inactive' as in, 'where is the chairman hibernating?' The StdIntE sense of 'animals going into sleep' is semantically expanded to include 'people keeping out of active public life or appearance for sometime.'

The participial adjective 'pressed' in 'to be pressed' has two StdIntE

meanings:

- i) Not to have enough of something such as time or money (OALD).
- ii) Made flat using force or a heavy object; (of food) given a firm shape by being packed into a container (OALD).

The two StdIntE meanings above received acceptance from eighteen and seven respondents respectively. The KenE meaning, which seems more prevalently used than the StdIntE ones, was selected by thirty-eight (93 per cent) respondents. The KenE meaning is, 'in urgent need to relieve oneself.' The StdIntE sense of 'being in need of something that is not enough' is transferred with a Kenyan meaning, so that it acquires the sense "need to relieve oneself."

The verb 'to assume' has its StdIntE meaning as:

To believe (something) to be true without actually having proof that it is so; suppose, as in, 'we can't just assume her guilt' (OALD).

To begin to have power or responsibility (OALD).

To pretend to have a particular feeling or quality; put on, as in, 'He assumed an air of importance' (OALD).

The questionnaire in this study provided only the first meaning, which was acceptable to thirty-one (76 per cent) respondents. The KenE meaning – 'to ignore; pretend not to have seen or recognized a person', as in, 'I tried to

greet her but she assumed me' was chosen by thirty-two (78 per cent) respondents. The sense of 'pretence' in the KenE meaning of the verb possibly stems from its third StdIntE meaning stated above: 'to pretend to have a particular feeling or quality.'

The noun 'double-decker' has two StdIntE meanings:

- i) A bus with two floors one on top of the other (OALD)
- ii) A type of sandwich made with three pieces of bread, leaving two spaces that are filled with food (LDCE).

The first meaning was accepted by twenty-one (51 per cent) respondents. The second meaning seems to be unfamiliar to KenE speakers as only one respondent accepted it. This represented 2 per cent acceptability.

The KenE meaning of the noun 'a bed with two levels' was selected by thirty-seven (90 per cent) respondents. Interestingly, one respondent indicated that the word does not exist! Clearly then, the KenE and StdIntE meanings of the word co-exist, but the KenE is more prevalently used. The reference of 'double-decker' as 'a kind of bed' is a transfer of meaning. The semantic status of the word has been generalized to designate any structure that has two floors, one above the other.

'To demarcate' means 'to mark or establish the limits of something' (OALD), as in, 'plots of land have been demarcated by barbed wire.' This StdIntE meaning was familiar to twenty-six (63 per cent) respondents. The KenE meaning added to the word is 'divide land into portions or sections.' This

meaning was accepted by thirty (73 per cent) respondents. The StdIntE and KenE meanings of the word differ on intentionality; one can mark the limits of a piece of land without necessarily dividing it into portions. The KenE meaning includes the sense in the StdIntE meaning; when one divides a piece of land into portions, he is in essence showing the limits of each one of them.

The verb 'to befriend' is an entry in StdIntE which means 'to become a friend of somebody, especially somebody who has just arrived in a place or needs your help' (OALD), as in, 'They befriended me when I first arrived in school.' This meaning was preferred by twenty-four (59 per cent) respondents. Another meaning and which is not a StdIntE definition is, 'to act as a friend generally.' It was chosen by eighteen (44 per cent) respondents. The KenE meaning that the word has acquired is, 'to get into an intimate relationship with a member of the opposite sex with the purpose of getting married' as in, 'He befriended her for two years before getting married to her.' The KenE meaning was selected by twenty-nine (71 per cent) respondents.

In the StdIntE, 'to befriend' refers to a short-lived relationship between one person and another in order to receive help. In KenE, on other hand, it is used to mean 'treating people as friends generally' and 'getting into a relationship with permanent implications of getting married.'

'Upstairs' is a noun which means 'an upper floor of a house' (LDCE). This StdIntE meaning was preferred by thirty-six (88 per cent) respondents. The KenE meaning, '(of human) intelligence' as in, 'John is very smart upstairs'

received acceptance from twenty-seven (66 per cent) respondents. The transfer of meaning could be attributed to the fact that the brain, the source of human intelligence, is in the human head, which is the upper-most organ of the human body. See the sentence below:

A good guy upstairs would use a torch or selectively whisper out the poignant message. (*Daily Nation – Saturday Magazine, July 31, 2004, pg. 8*).

### **3.3 WORDS WITH MEANINGS FROM WORD FORMATION IN KENYAN ENGLISH**

There are words which acquire KenE meanings after going through morphological processes. In this sub-section we use the following words to illustrate this category of meanings:

Pastoralist, outgrower, majorly, saved, mob justice, torchbearer and bicycle-taxi. The noun 'pastoralist' with a KenE meaning of 'one who survives on livestock farming, feeds sheep, goats, camels and cattle on pasture for survival' is not an entry in StdIntE. The adjective entry 'pastoral', and which means 'relating to the farming of animals' is by analogy used to form the noun 'pastoralist' and given the KenE meaning cited above. The suffix morpheme '~ist' is added to the adjective to mean, 'the person associated with or does what goes with the root word.' That this word and its semantic content are entrenched in KenE can be indicated from the fact that thirty-nine out of forty-one (95 per cent) respondents accepted its use in KenE. The following sentence illustrates kenE usage of the word.

pastoralists left out in Aids war (*Sunday Standard-Subheading*), April 18, 2004, Pg. 8).

*The Reader's Digest Illustrated Oxford Dictionary (1998)* defines: 'Pastoralist as "a farmer of sheep and cattle", and notes that this is Australian English. 'Pastoralist' appears in KenE because there are Kenyan communities whose livelihood entirely depends on the keeping of animals.

Another noun 'out-grower' does not exist in StdIntE. The word that is close to it is the verb 'out-grow' which carries the meanings of:

To grow too big to be able to wear or fit into something (OALD)

To grow taller, larger or more quickly than another person (OALD).

To stop doing something or lose interest in something as you become older (OALD).

Only four respondents accepted the meaning, 'one who has grown out of one's clothes' in relation to (i) above. 'Out-grower' then if formed by the addition of a derivational suffix '~er', which changes that verb 'out-grow' into a noun. The noun has acquired a KenE meaning of 'a small scale farmer commissioned by a factory to grow a cash crop, outside its nucleus or premises with the support of that factory, for example, a sugar cane out-grower.' This meaning was preferred by thirty (73 per cent respondents).

The KenE meaning could be emanating from the fact that some farmers grow cash crops on their own farms that are outside the processing factory. Those 'who grow outside' have come to be referred to as 'out-growers' in KenE.



The adverb 'majorly' means 'very; extremely' (OALD) as in; 'I am majorly disappointed by your poor show.' It should be noted that the word does not appear as an entry in earlier editions used for this dictionary. The edition used for this study adds that the word 'majorly' belongs to the slang vocabulary in AME (American English). In KenE, the word means, 'mainly, chiefly, principally' as in: 'The meat consumed in Nairobi majorly comes from the Central province region.' The meaning was accepted by thirty-nine (95 per cent) of the forty-one respondents. The KenE originates from the StdIntE meaning of the adjective 'major' thus, 'very large or important' (OALD).

"Saved" is taken as an adjective in KenE to mean, "to be born again, accept Jesus as saviour." It should be pointed out that evangelization that is associated with the word "saved", like "crusade" discussed in 3.1 above, originated from the West; it may not be restricted to Kenyan use only. 'Saved' does not appear as an entry in the StdIntE dictionaries used for this study. Thirty-seven respondents 'ticked' against the KenE meaning. This represents 90 per cent acceptability of the meaning.

'Mob justice' is a compound word with the KenE meaning, "an attack or harm meted out to a criminal or suspect by a crowd of people." The entry that appears in the StdIntE as the noun "mob" means, "a large crowd of people, especially one that may become violent or cause trouble" (OALD). "Mob-justice" may have been coined when the Kenyan masses felt that the government was not doing enough to stem crime. Criminals would receive

what the public thought was lenient treatment from the law enforcement machinery – the police and the courts. The crowds then resorted to subjecting the suspects to “justice” by lynching them, to show their protest and dissatisfaction with the institution of justice. The word “mob” could not aptly capture the scenario as it were; the crowds would not only be violent, but they would also seek “justice” by acting as judges and executioners.

The KenE meaning was accepted by forty out of forty-one respondents-( 98 per cent) acceptability.

The noun “torch-bearer” in KenE means “one who represents a group, party, country in a competition or election.” The Kenyan meaning of this compound noun was acceptable to thirty-eight (93 per cent) of the respondents, “Torch-bearer” is not an entry in the StdIntE dictionaries. However, a French-English and English-French dictionary, the *Collins Robert French Dictionary 6<sup>th</sup> Edition (2002)* has the word “torch-bearer”, but with a definition (in its French translation) that is literal, since it means: “somebody who bears a torch.” This is different from the sense in which it is used in KenE. The KenE meaning is reflected in the following sentence:

Nyagudi, earlier thought to be an obvious winner is facing stiff competition from KANU’S Shem Kwegu and the Ford People torchbearer – Orié Rogo Manduli. (*Sunday Standard, April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2004, Pg. 32*).

The KenE meaning possibly arises from the meanings of constituent words of the compound. “ A torch” has a StdIntE sense of “ a long piece of wood that

has material at one end, that is set on fire and that people carry to give light” (OALD). “ To bear” is taken to mean, to carry somebody or something, especially while moving,” (OALD). “ Torch-bearer has possibly got its KenE meaning from the fact that an individual is chosen to carry “light”; to lead others to victory. Closely related to “torch-bearer” in meaning is another KenE coined compound noun ‘flag-bearer.’ The two formations are used interchangeably in KenE.

A “bicycle – taxi” in KenE is used to mean “ a means of transport; a bicycle that is hired for a charge that is based on the length and time of the journey,” as in the sentence below:

The Kisumu D.C has warned bicycle-taxi “boda-boda” operators against working at night. (*Sunday standard, February 8, 2004,page 5*)

This entry is not found in the StdIntE because it represents a phenomenon that is peculiar to Kenya. A ‘taxi’ in StdIntE is a car that people hire for transport. Since bicycles in Kenya offer such services as taxis do, the compound lexeme ‘bicycle-taxi’ has been integrated into KenE and given a transferred meaning. The KenE meaning was accepted by thirty-five (85 per cent) respondents.

### 3.4 WORDS BORROWED FROM INDIGENOUS KENYAN LANGUAGES

In a multilingual society, like Kenya, one language is bound to borrow words from the other languages used within the speech community. Indeed, StdIntE itself has borrowed extensively from other languages such as French, Latin and Greek, and integrated the borrowed words into its system using its rules. The Kenyan variety of English borrows from the indigenous languages to reflect and express phenomena peculiar to Kenya, in terms of the social structures and values of the society. While some of the borrowings are ephemeral, others obtain a permanent footing in KenE.

Whereas this study does not dwell on this category of words, it nevertheless mentions some of the words that fall within it because they are part of the semantic distinctiveness of KenE. Some of the words listed below are picked from lecture notes by Okombo (1987:46). However, the corresponding KenE meanings given to the loan words are mine. The language of origin for each word is given in brackets.

'A panga' (Swahili): a kind of machete

'A shamba' (Swahili): a farm

'A baraza' (Swahili): an official gathering meant to educate and solve conflicts.

'A manamba' (Sheng): a tout on public service vehicle.

"Chang'aa" (Swahili): a kind of local illicit brew

"Githeri" (Kikuyu): a meal cooked from a mixture of maize and beans.

"A kiosk" (Swahili): a small temporary structure that operates as a shop with a limited stock of goods.

"Mwananchi" (Swahili): An ordinary citizen; antonym of "Mheshimiwa" (Swahili), which means "honourable".

"A Moran" (Maasai): a warrior, waiting to be an elder.

"A duka" (Swahili): a shop. It is possibly a clip from 'dukawalla', which means 'a person who owns a shop' in the Indian language. Swahili could have borrowed from this language.

'Askari' (Swahili): a soldier, policeman or guard.

'Kanzu' (Swahili): a flowing robe worn for religious purposes.

'Harambee' (Swahili): pulling together; a way of raising funds

A 'shuka' (Swahili): a piece of garment, unmade cloth that women cover their waist with.

### 3.5 A TABLE SHOWING THE RATE OF ACCEPTANCE OF KENYAN ENGLISH MEANINGS

The acceptance levels of the KenE meanings from the responses to the questionnaire are provided in the table below. The words are arranged in a descending order, starting from words with the highest percentage acceptance.

Words	Number of respondents out of 41	% of acceptance
Crusade	41	100
Thrice	41	100
To interdict	40	98
Mob justice	40	98
To clear	40	98
To retrench	39	95

7	Severally	39	95
8	Majorly	39	95
9	Pastoralist	39	95
10	To escort	39	95
11	Docket	38	93
12	Torchbearer	38	93
13	To land	38	93
14	Be pressed	38	93
15	Dame	37	90
16	Be saved	37	90
17	Double-Decker	37	90
18	To avail	36	88
19	Bicycle taxi	35	85
20	Upcoming	35	85
21	Street girl	35	85
22	To bounce	35	85
23	To offset	35	85
24	Dowry	35	85
25	Otherwise	34	83
26	To backslide	34	83
27	Safari	33	80
28	To assume	32	78
29	To demarcate	30	73
30	To rewind	30	73
31	Out-grower	30	73
32	Lady	30	73
33	To surcharge	29	71
34	To tarmac	29	71
35	To befriend	29	71
36	To criss-cross	29	71
37	To rhyme	28	68

B 3 A	To hibernate	28	68
	Upstairs	27	66
	To pocket	21	51

From the table, 'crusade' and 'thrice' had the highest acceptance levels of KenE meanings (100%), while 'to pocket' had the lowest level of 51%. There are words whose KenE meanings are prevalently used, and yet the study recorded relatively lower percentages in their acceptability levels. The two notable examples are the verbs 'to rhyme' and 'to pocket.'

# CHAPTER FOUR:

## PROCESSES AND CLASSES OF MEANING CHANGE WITH REGARD TO KENYAN ENGLISH MEANINGS

Meaning change occurs through systematic processes. In this chapter we will discuss the processes through which lexemes in KenE change in meaning and accommodate additional sense. We will also examine the factors that influence meaning change and the classes under which the processes of meaning change fall.

### 4.1 PROCESSES OF MEANING CHANGE IN SECOND LANGUAGE VARIETIES

The processes through which meaning in second language varieties, such as Kenyan English, change are normal processes of linguistic developments. Stern (1931:176) notes that "a sense change is adequately explained if we can explain its happening as a normal process in the mind of one person."

The difficulty of this proposition, however, lies in the fact that psychological dispositions are obscure and unquantifiable. They also differ, as Fodor (1975:16) observes, in "extent and kind from one person to person and from occasion to occasion." Stern (1931:176) refers to change in meaning as phases of linguistic development" which fall under events that:

Occur repeatedly in the mind of the originator.

Can be imitated by other speakers to whom the new use of the word will present itself as a normal way of speech.



Happen, independent of imitation, in the mind of other speakers who find themselves confronted by the same linguistic task as the first.

From these events, I have come up with four phases of meaning change, these are: the initiation phase, the imitation phase, the fossilization phase, the internationalisation phase.

We look at each phase in the following sub-sections.

#### **4.1.1 THE INITIATION PHASE**

This is a phase in which the idea of a meaning forms in the minds of high-class speakers (those with extensive exposure to the standard varieties) as originators or INITIATORS. Schmieid (1991:48) says that the high-class in the second language situation consists of speakers " whose proficiency and competence in the language is as close as possible to the reference model", in our case StdIntE. He talks of the " Cline of Bilingualism" to refer to societal considerations in levels of proficiency. These are influenced by factors such as the extent of exposure to the language, the level of education, the position held in the society and the occupation of the speakers. The INITIATORS of meaning change are therefore the speakers of " the acrolect cline" of English (Ibid: 48). This comprises speakers who have had higher education at universities in their home countries or English speaking nations and occupy job positions that require the use of the standard English variety. These include "newspaper editors, lawyers, university lecturers and senior officers in the civil service" (Ibid:48).

Apart from the exposure to the language and formal education, initiators occupy positions that influence public opinion. Philip Ochieng, a writer with a local newspaper, reiterates the influence of initiators in sense change by noting that "if anybody used the word 'lacrymal', in a political context-if Kiraitu Murungi, for instance spoke of 'lacrymal swellings' in the constitution-the word would be dead in a wee, done to death by overuse..."

*(Sunday Nation, May 23,2004:pg 9)*

When initiators use words in whatever sense, sometimes erroneously, their use is immediately imitated without being counter-checked. That is probably how the senses of words such as 'retrench', 'docket' and surcharge' begin to acquire a KenE character.

#### **4.1.2 THE IMITATION PHASE**

The initiation stage is spontaneously followed by the imitation phase when speakers, to whom the emerging use of the word relevantly applies in their way of speech or writing, begin to put the word into vigorous use. The sustainability of the new senses will largely depend on their frequency and extensive usage. The new senses largely spread to the public domain through the mass media. The IMITATORS do not bother to investigate whether the words are used in their "correct" (StdInE) senses or not; they use them merely for reasons of 'linguistic security' (to be identified within the speech community) and prestige. Some words and meanings receive an extended share of attention and end up "sticking" while others are simply relegated to the periphery and finally "dropped".

### 4.1.3 THE FOSSILIZATION PHASE

When the words and meanings, stabilize and begin to operate beyond imitation, they become fossilized in the second language variety. The new words and meanings become permanent representations in the mind of the speakers, who use them spontaneously. If the speakers encounter the KenE meanings without being familiar with their StdIntE counterparts, then the KenE ones are prevalently used, and with time, get entrenched, while the stdIntE meanings are relegated to the "fringes." The meaning of words such as "off-set" and "docket" have acquired totally different meanings possibly because their StdIntE meanings were unknown to KenE speaker by the time they absorbed the KenE senses. On the other hand, when the KenE speakers know the stdIntE meanings before they acquire the KenE meaning, the two kinds of meanings are likely to co-exist in the KenE semantic system.

When words and meanings are fossilized, they become a feature in Kenyan media (electronic and print), official publications and even formal correspondence. The word "Kamukunji" has been absorbed in KenE, and it is not uncommon to hear a new item on electronic media with a reading such as:

"The workers staged a 'Kamukunji' and demanded that the Managing Director address them."

"Kamukunji" was initiated to mean "the act of people agitating for change or a right gathering to chart a strategy to have their grievances addressed by the authorities."

#### 4.1.4 THE INTERNATIONALIZATION PHASE

While many meanings in regional varieties remain locally used, some become universally employed and get integrated into the stdIntE variety. Lexicographers treat them as entries in international English dictionaries, though sometimes with definitions that distort their original senses. Schmied (1991:78-79) gives an example of the word "Kwashiokor" which has been integrated into standard English, but "its west African origin is forgotten and instead it is used world-wide as the name of a severe protein deficiency disease, unfortunately only too often still to be found in Africa." In East African English, the word "safari" taken from Swahili to mean a "journey" generally, has been entrenched into the world dictionaries with a definition: "a trip to see or hunt wild animals."

It is also important to note that some words and meanings simply "die off". Meaning and word mortality occurs when the event or referent associated with the word is no longer evident. The word "Kungfu" in StdInE means "a Chinese system of fighting without weapons, similar to Karate" (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition (2001)*). The word was used in KenE in mid 70's to refer to a "kind of dance." This word is no longer used in Kenya because "the kind of dance" associated with the word is no longer realized in Kenya. "Break-dancing"-associated with (or invented by) Michael Jackson, is another word that is no longer in use in Kenya. It refers to a "style of dancing with acrobatic movements, often performed in the street." The

word has "passed out" because this kind of dance is no longer practised in Kenya.

There are also words, which are archaic in StdIntE, but have remained in current use in Kenyan English. The word "thrice", used in KenE to mean "three times", is marked "dated" in StdIntE, and only used in the poetic sense. All the forty-one KenE respondents (100 percent) selected this KenE meaning.

## **4.2 FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE MEANING CHANGE IN KENYAN ENGLISH**

Meaning change is generally influenced by several factors. This section will discuss five factors that facilitate sense change with regard to KenE. These are: generational factors, cultural factors, mass media, role models and second language acquisition.

### **4.2.1 Generational factors**

These factors are based on the assumption that language is used differently by speakers in different age brackets to designate the same referents. Some words are commonly used by the teenage KenE speakers, such as university students, that this study partly targeted as respondents to the questionnaire, while others are preferred by adults. Although this was not directly reflected in the questionnaire, interviews with the respondents showed that the college age bracket uses the word "dame" to refer to " a young lady." The adults

even consider it as sheng (a language associated with the urban youth in Kenya). Where the adults use 'repeat' to mean 'going through a process or course again', the youth would use 'rewind.' This KenE meaning of the word 'rewind' received 73 per cent approval.

Other examples include "to tune", "to push" and "to dub" used by students and the youth generally in the place of "to seduce", "to court" and "to copy" respectively. The youth informally use "to flush" where adults would use "to abort." Some of the words and meanings that the KenE speakers pick at their teenage or college years persist in the speakers' adult age.

#### **4.2.2 Cultural Factors**

New meanings are added onto English words to reflect the culture that is peculiar to Kenya. The word "dowry" in StdIntE originally meant "the property and money a woman brings to her husband's family in marriage." (LDCE). In the culture of Kenyan communities, it is husbands who take property to their wives' home. That is possibly why this KenE sense of meaning was 'ticked' by 85 per cent of the respondents, against the 26 percent who preferred the StdIntE meaning. To capture this cultural concept, the words "bride price" or "bride-wealth"- cited by Skandera (2003:159), have been 'coined' in the place of 'dowry', a word which does not represent what goes on in the Kenyan situation and possibly in other parts of Africa.

The word "outgrower" has a KenE meaning of "a child born out of wedlock" and which received 51 per cent acceptance. This may be arising from the fact that in some Kenyan communities, specifically in Western Kenya, parents are allowed to bring "home" children born as a result of relationships with women or men other than their present spouses. This KenE meaning is close to another meaning of the word: "a farmer who grows a cash crop outside the processing factory," and which was selected by 73 per cent of the KenE respondents. Notably, Western Kenya is dotted with sugar-cane outgrower farmers, a factor that could be contributing to the transfer of meaning.

#### **4.2.3 Mass Media**

The mass media is expected to uphold high standards of language use. As a result, KenE speakers are bound to take the senses in which words are used in the newspapers and radio broadcasts as guidance to their use of language. They often encounter words such as "interdict", "retrench", "surcharge" and "docket," used in newspaper editorials and opinion columns in the Kenyan sense. The proficiency of these writers is supposedly exemplary, and their use of words is likely to be imitated. In our words in chapter three, we have used sentences from our local newspapers in which these words are used. Other KenE speakers adopt these meanings, which they spread through use in wider social interactions.

#### **4.2.4 Role Models**

As pointed out in section 4.1.1, there are members of the speech community whose use of English is considered impeccable. They are, in other words, role models who have had higher education, especially in English-speaking nation, and are held in high esteem by the "ordinary" members of the speech community. For example, the local word "Jua kali" which means: hot sun" was first used by Charles Njonjo (a former Kenyan Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs) during a parliamentary debate. The word is often used in Kenyan English as an adjective to refer to "a common-place" thing. In KenE, it also means "a sector of the economy that includes artisans who work in the open". The word is now a permanent feature of KenE. Other role models in the use of English are editors of leading newspapers, University lecturers, elite civil servants and policy makers, lawyers, judges and high school teachers of English.

#### **4.2.5 Second Language Learning**

Most of the speakers of English in Kenya use it as their second language. In the course of learning English as a second language, speakers are likely to make "errors" in their use of the words. When the "errors" of meaning originate from, or are acceptable to role models, such meanings become entrenched into the variety. For instance, the plural noun "dues" is used in KenE to mean, "that which is owed to somebody and should be given or paid by right". Its correct StdIntE definition is "charges, for example, to a member of a club or society," (LCDE). 98 per cent of the respondents selected the



KenE definition while 32 per cent preferred the StdIntE meaning. The 'error' has therefore become a feature of 'correct' KenE. What people should get by right is what is due to them and NOT their dues.

The noun "saloon" is erroneously used by KenE speakers for 'salon', which means "a ship or store that gives customers beauty treatment" (OALD). The meaning of "saloon" as "a hair-dressing shop" was selected by 77 per cent of the respondents. This erroneous meaning could have resulted from analogy-similarity in form between 'saloon' and salon.

#### **4.3 KENYAN ENGLISH MEANING WITHIN STERN'S SEVEN CLASSES OF MEANING CHANGE.**

In chapter one, we indicated that we would investigate the concept of word-meaning change within "the seven classes of sense-change" model as advanced by Stern (1931:167). Meaning change is not arbitrary, but takes a systematic theoretical channel that is discussed in the sub-sections that follow. The seven classes of meaning change are: substitution, analogy shortening, transfer, nomination, adequation and permutation.

##### **4.3.1 Substitution**

Substitution is a class of sense-change in which words narrow or expand their meaning to designate objects, and reflect the evolving socio-cultural and technological values of speech community. There are three levels of substitution: narrowed substitution, expanded substitution and inverted substitution. We illustrate each level below.

#### **4.3.1.1 Narrowed Substitution**

The word retrench has gone through the process of substitution by narrowing the sense of "cutting costs" generally to that of "laying off workers" in particular. Another example of narrowed substitution is the KenE meaning of 'backslide'. In StdIntE, it generally refers to "the act of relapsing into bad ways from former virtuous ways of life". KenE has narrowed it to the act of 'a saved' person going back to sin after a period of upright behaviour.

#### **4.3.1.2 Expanded Substitution**

This level of substitution involves a word acquiring extra senses in KenE, and widening its referential domain. The verb "to escort" has expanded to include the casual, courteous gesture sending off friends or visitors. "Lady" has expanded from the sense of "the morally upright and respected woman" to "any woman" It is not uncommon to hear a KenE speaker complain about a woman and at the same time refer to her as a lady, as in, 'That lady at the counter is very silly. "To be pressed" has expanded to absorb the sense of "going out for a call". The verb 'to hibernate' has extended its reference in KenE from animals to include human beings as well. The verb 'to learn' has an additional meaning of "to have a class or study" Buregeya (2001:1).

#### **4.3.1.3 Inverted Substitution**

As the word "inverted" suggests, this kind of substitution re-arranges the order of the senses. The word 'surcharge' in KenE has been inverted from the sense of "one having to pay an additional amount of levy" to one where "an

amount owed to somebody is withheld". The word "dowry" is also inverted from "the payment of property to a husband's family by a wife" to that where "the payment is made by a husband to a wife's family." As pointed out earlier in chapter one under the theoretical framework, the substitutions are instigated by non-linguistic factors, usually cultural ones.

#### **4.3.2 Analogy**

Some words in KenE have accommodated meanings of words with which they share characteristics of word class, spelling or pronunciation. The verb 'to avail' is by analogy taken to mean "make available" in KenE. "To avail" is therefore considered the verb form of the adjective 'available' and yet the two differ in meaning. The second example is the adverb 'severally' which is close to the adjective 'several' in form. KenE has drawn the meaning of 'severally' from that of 'several'. The StdIntE meaning of 'severally' which is "separately or differently" is by analogy changed to "more than few" and yet this should be the meaning of "several." The third example of analogy is the KenE meaning assigned to the adverb "majorly." "Major" and "majorly" have varying meanings in StdIntE. The KenE speakers give the meanings of "major"- 'very large or important' (OALD), to that of "majorly". "Majorly" which is said to be an AmE (American English) slang is used to mean: "very, extremely" (OALD), as in, " I am majorly impressed with your work."

### **4.3.3 Shortening**

In the shortening class, new meaning is created by omitting elements of a word or a whole word from an expression. There are two types of shortenings: clippings and omissions. Clipping is the shortening of words. We have not been able to identify clippings that are peculiar to KenE, but in StdIntE, "gym" is a clipping from the word "gymnasium" (OALD). Omission, on the other hand, is the dropping of words from a composite expression. The adjective expression "up and coming" which means "likely to be successful and popular in the future" (OALD) drops the conjunction "and" in KenE, so that the new word becomes "upcoming" but still retains the meaning of the former larger unit. Other instances of shortening could be the dropping of the noun "school" from expressions "secondary school" and "primary school." The expression "mobile phone" usually loses the noun "phone." The adjective "mobile" takes the burden of the dropped word and becomes a noun. People talk of 'mobile' to mean the same referent as "a mobile phone." However, this is not peculiar to KenE as the latest editions of English dictionaries have "mobile" as an entry.

### **4.3.4 Transfer**

Transfer in meaning is based on how speakers perceive similarities between objects. The characteristics and functions associated with objects give rise to meaning. The KenE meaning of "double-decker" for "bunk bed" is transferred from the StdIntE sense of "a bus" due to its appearance. Since the bus has

two levels, the word could be used to refer to any object with two floors or levels.

The word "bicycle-taxi" has a transferred meaning in KenE because of the function of the referent. The "bicycle-taxi" serves Kenyans in the same manner a taxi (a car) does: it is hired at a fee to transport people in the same manner a car taxi does, hence the transfer in meaning. "Docket", which means "a label that gives information about an item" in stdIntE, has transferred meaning in KenE possibly because every official (portfolio) has a 'label' that describes the duties to be performed by the occupant of the position or office.

"upstairs", accepted by KenE speakers as of human intelligence, is transferred meaning from "an upper floor of a house" possibly because the head, which is associated intelligence, is the upper most part of the body.

#### **4.3.5 Nomination**

Nomination is the transfer of a name from one referent to another, with an intention of communicating messages with a particular effect. The use of the word 'dame' in KenE is a typical example of nomination. It brings out the "youthfulness" and "beauty" of the referent as seen by the speaker. It projects a romantic tone of the speaker and expresses his attitude towards the referent. The word "parrot" refers to "a bird that has a curved beak and usually brightly coloured feathers and is capable of being able to be taught to copy human speech" (OALD). In KenE, the same word is used, in a

derogatory sense, to refer to a person who speaks more than he should. This nomination expresses one's contempt, effectively communicated through the choice of a specific word. Suffice it to say that nomination captures the emotive component of meaning.

#### **4.3.6 Adequation**

Adequation hinges not on the appearance of the object, but the purpose that its characteristics serve. The word "rhyme", which means " words with similar sounds" in StdIntE, has undergone meaning change through adequation to mean, "getting along with somebody." 'Similarity of sound' is altered to match " similarity of opinion, thought and desires", and hence the harmony and friendliness between individuals.

#### **4.3.7 Permutation**

The meaning of words, in the case of permutation, comes to be associated with the action over the years. The verb "to criss-cross" means " to form lines crossing each other on a parcel of land," (LDCE). With time, it has come to be associated with " the purposeful movement from one point to another" in KenE.

The verb " to tarmac" means "to cover road's surface with a mixture of tar..." (LDCE). This act of making roads has come to be associated with the act of 'walking' on the tarmacked roads, and which in turn has acquired a KenE meaning: 'looking for employment.' Originally, tarmacking in the sense of seeking employment actually involved "walking". With time, it included any

effort one makes to get employment, which would also involve movement from one office or place to another.

It should be pointed out that most of the meaning alterations in KenE fall within the first four classes, and that sometimes the words acquire new meanings through processes involving more than one class. For example, the word "bicycle-taxi" discussed above, has acquired a transferred meaning, which has undergone adequation due to the purpose that the characteristics of its referent serve the speakers.

## CHAPTER FIVE:

### OTHER SEMANTIC CHARACTERISTICS OF KENYAN ENGLISH

Apart from the idiomaticity feature of KenE, which is extensively covered by Skandera (2003), there are other aspects that could form topics of research by linguists interested in the Kenyan English variety. The aspects briefly covered in this chapter, some of which are discussed by Schmied (1991) under the African English forms, are idioms such as 'sail in the same boat', semantic redundancy as 'pool resources together' and collocations such as 'smooth sailing.' The chapter also looks at words whose meanings are unfamiliar or unknown to KenE speakers and neologisms in KenE.

#### 5.1 THE KENYAN ENGLISH IDIOM

Bolinger, quoted in Skandera (2003:43), regards idioms as 'group of words with set meanings that cannot be calculated by adding up the separate meanings of the parts.' As indicated above, idioms have been elaborately covered in the most recent studies on KenE by Skandera (2003). He has looked at the divergences that exist in the English idiom as used in StdIntE. He also examines how KenE has altered the StdIntE idioms to give them a distinct Kenyan English character. This is done through processes such as lexical addition, omission and replacement.

'Take a French leave' is an example of KenE lexical addition listed on the table of KenE idioms by Skandera (2003:119). In StdIntE, the indefinite article 'a' does not appear in the idiom. The idiom is 'take French leave' in StdIntE with the meaning, 'to leave work without asking permission first' (OALD). The



article 'a' has therefore been added to the idiom in its KenE usage. Lexical omission occurs when a word is left out of a StdIntE idiom in KenE. An example that he gives is 'follow somebody's footsteps', which means 'to do the same job, have the same style of life' (OALD). In the StdIntE dictionary (OALD), the idiom is entered as 'follow in somebody's footsteps', which carried the particle 'in', that is omitted in KenE.

Lexical replacements entail substituting one word in a StdIntE idiom for another word in KenE. The StdIntE idiom 'take a leaf from somebody', which means 'to copy somebody's behaviour and do things in the same way that they do' (OALD), has the word 'take' replaced with 'borrow' in KenE. The KenE idiom then reads, 'borrow a leaf from somebody.'

Apart from the changes in the form of StdIntE idioms, the meanings of idioms are bound to be altered in KenE. There are also idioms that have been coined in KenE but do not exist as entries in StdIntE for example 'to give somebody the push' in StdIntE means 'to dismiss somebody from a job' (OALD). In KenE, the definite article is replaced with an indefinite article 'a'- 'give somebody a push' and the meaning altered: 'to see somebody off; to accompany somebody out of one's house with the intention of saying goodbye. 'To put somebody in' in StdIntE means 'to elect somebody to govern a country' (OALD). In KenE, the expression is used to mean 'to cause somebody to be put into police custody.'

'To bring somebody into the fold' in KenE means 'to make somebody support ideas or plans of a group or organization to which one belongs.' StdIntE has

an entry of 'the fold' with the meaning 'a group of people with whom you feel belong or who share the same ideas or beliefs.'

'To be out of somebody' is a KenE idiom that means: 'to be no longer on talking terms, to disagree or hate somebody', as in: 'I am out of that useless man.'

## 5.2 SEMANTIC REDUNDANCY

Redundancy occurs when the meaning of a word is expressed by another word in the same context. Whereas these redundancies would be considered errors, Skandera (2003:116) says; 'What Hocking classifies as an error is, from a descriptivist's point of view, an integral part of KenE.' Thus, though the expressions are considered incorrect in StdIntE meaning, they nevertheless become part of the variety spoken even by the high class models.

In the sentence 'Harambees enable Kenyans to pool their resources together', the meaning of 'together' is contained in that of 'pool'. Another example of redundancy cited by Schmied (1991: 86) is the use of the expression 'secret ballot.' In StdIntE, 'ballot' by itself means 'the system of voting in writing and usually in secret' (OALD). The presence of 'secret' is therefore semantically redundant. Two more examples of this aspect are:

From today hence forth, we shall not allow personal cheques

We can be able to win public confidence if we address the issue of corruption credibly.

In example (i), 'henceforth' means 'starting from a particular time and at all times in the future' (OALD) and so it caters for the meaning of 'from today.'

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In (ii) the word 'able' expresses the same meaning as the modal auxiliary 'can'. Schmieid (1991: 87) notes that 'these examples illustrate a second language strategy of playing safe and saying rather too much than too little.'

### **5.3 COLLOCATION**

Collocation refers to 'the habitual co-occurrence of lexical items' Crystal (1991:62). The following are examples of collocations in KenE: free and fair elections, precautionary measures, memorandum of understanding and due to unavoidable circumstances.

The first two are used in the realm of governance. The collocates are linked with the conjunction 'and'. Example (iv) is fast getting entrenched into KenE having been initiated from the political front and usually abbreviated as 'M.O.U.' The last one is nearly used stereotypically by KenE speakers who wish to offer apologies and excuses.

### **5.4 UNFAMILIAR MEANINGS IN KENYAN ENGLISH**

Some StdIntE meanings seem unfamiliar to KenE speakers. This could be attributed to either limited exposure to the language, or the fact that these meanings do not reflect issues that are of immediate relevance to the speakers, in terms of their life values. This sub-section will mention some of the words together with the meanings considered unfamiliar and the number of respondents who were familiar with each meaning from our study. The

words are commonly used in KenE, but with StdIntE meanings other than the ones mentioned.

- i) **Sexy:** up to date and attracting a lot of interest as in, 'Information technology seems to be a sexy subject at the moment', (OALD) Only three respondents (7 per cent) were familiar with this meaning.
- ii) **Bursary:** The office of a person in a college or school who is responsible for accounts; a bursar's office (LDCE). Two respondents (5 per cent) selected this meaning.
- iii) **Double-decker:** A sandwich made with three pieces of bread leaving two spaces that are filled with food (OALD). Only one respondent (2 per cent) was familiar with this meaning.
- iv) **Stakeholder:** A person chosen to hold money given by opponents in a race or bet and give it to the winner at the end (OALD). Three respondents (7 per cent) opted for this meaning of the word.
- v) **Madam:** A woman who is in charge of a house of prostitutes (brothel), taking from them some of their payments (LDCE). Two respondents (5 per cent) were familiar with the meaning.
- vi) **Transport:** A ship or aircraft for carrying soldiers and supplies, from one place to another (OALD). Only three respondents (7 per cent) chose this meaning.
- vii) **A mobile:** A decoration or work of art made of small models, cards tied to a wire or string and hung up so that it is moved by

currents of air (LDCE). It was selected by only two respondents (5 per cent acceptance).

- viii) Saloon: A grandly furnished room for social use of ship passengers (LDCE). Three respondents (7 per cent) were familiar with the meaning.

## **5.5 NEOLOGISMS**

These are new words or expressions that are creeping into Kenyan English. These words and their meanings are yet to be established within the variety, but are nonetheless a feature of the semantic system of KenE currently. As noted by Ombongi (2003: 64), the words are prevalent within the fast growing telecommunication industry. He says that the words 'have been semantically broadened to fit a particular usage.'

'SMS' which is an abbreviation for 'short message service', is used as a noun and verb to refer to the text message. KenE speakers talk of 'sending an SMS' to refer to a text message and not the service as the abbreviation would suggest. "To SMS" somebody is the act of sending somebody a text message. 'M.O.U' is another abbreviation that has gained word status in KenE. As pointed out in 5.3, its complete form is 'memorandum of understanding' to mean, 'mutual agreement between individuals or partners with common interests.'

The noun 'scratch-card', discussed in chapter one, falls under this group of words. The verb 'to load' refers to the act of 'feeding' a mobile phone with the number that is exposed from the scratching of a card. Mobile phone subscribers pay through the purchase of scratch-cards before they communicate. 'Credit' in KenE means 'the amount of money that enables a subscriber to access the pre-paid service.' It should be pointed out that these words may not necessarily be restricted to the KenE variety; <sup>they occur</sup> whether it occurs in other regional varieties is not within the scope of this study.

# CHAPTER SIX:

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

### 6.1 SUMMARY

This was a lexical-semantic study, which had four objectives to fulfil. We examined the status of meanings of words in KenE vis-à-vis their StdIntE meanings as entered in International English dictionaries. Using a sample of words, the divergences of KenE meanings from StdIntE meanings were pointed out. The words were discussed under four categories: words with altered meanings in KenE, words with additional KenE meanings, words with KenE meanings from word formation and words borrowed from indigenous languages.

We also looked at the processes through which words acquire changed meanings and discussed the factors responsible for meaning change in KenE. This was done by grounding the study within the lexico-semantic dynamism and Stern's seven classes of sense change. We took the view that meaning is as dynamic as the socio-cultural values that guide language use. The changes in the meaning of words in KenE take place through gradual systematic phases. The phases identified are the initiation, the imitation, the fossilization, the internationalisation phases.

Each of the phases is facilitated by a group of participants due to socio-linguistic factors and other factors extraneous to language. The factors discussed are the generational, cultural, mass media, role models and second

language learning. The KenE meanings were also accounted for within Stern's seven classes of sense change.

With examples, the meanings were classified under substitution, analogy Shortening, transfer, nomination, adequation, and permutation.

The study collected words and looked up their StdIntE meanings from English International dictionaries. The acceptability of the KenE meanings was then confirmed by administering a questionnaire of the StdIntE and KenE meanings to forty-one subjects (respondents). The results of the responses to the questionnaire formed the basis of the content of this study.

## **6.2. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, it is evident that KenE has a distinct semantic character. The variety seems to assign meanings to words in a manner that gives it an identity recognizable only to its speakers. The divergences, alterations and additions that meanings of words in KenE come to acquire do not make it a different language altogether. It still remains one English variety, serving its full functions of language. Secondly, the pedagogical implications of these KenE meanings ought to be addressed. The KenE meanings are penalised as errors by the Kenya National Examinations Council, and yet they are used by the teachers of English and even the English curriculum developers as speakers of KenE for everyday communication. The candidates should not be penalised, for it is likely that they emulate the use of KenE meanings from their teachers, 'prestigious' local dailies and other 'model' speakers. Relying



entirely on International English dictionaries in the teaching of vocabulary is misleading, as such dictionaries do not reflect the divergences in the regional varieties as far as meaning is concerned.

Perhaps lexicographers could consider capturing these differences through the compilation of a Kenyan English dictionary. This would be a positive step towards formalising the meanings.

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**QUESTIONNAIRE**

I am a postgraduate student of linguistics with an interest in semantics.  
I have collected a sample of fifty-four words with their various meanings.

- For each word mark a tick ( ✓ ) in the box beside any meaning you are familiar with.
- If you are familiar with more than one meaning of the word, then tick all the meanings you are familiar with.
- If a meaning of the word is wrong or unfamiliar to you, then mark an (x) in the box beside it.
- If you are familiar with other meaning(s) apart from the ones provided for each word, kindly write it/them in the space provided at the end of each word.
- Please do not write your name anywhere on this questionnaire.

Thank you for your participation.

1. A 'dame' means

- A young unmarried female e.g. The young man came home with a dame.
  - The title of a woman who has been given British rank of honour equal to that of a knight.
  - Any woman.
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2. 'A docket' means

- A list or piece of paper describing the contents of something , giving information about its use etc.
  - The portfolio or jurisdiction of an official, esp. government: e.g. Prisons fall under the docket of the minister for home affairs.
  - A place in court where a prisoner stands.
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3. 'A Crusade' means

- Any Christian war to win back Palestine from the Muslims in the 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries.
  - A Christian public worship session that is not limited to members of a sect only e.g. My attending the crusade gave me hope in life.
  - Any effort that goes against government policy.
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4. 'To interdict' means

- (Of Roman Catholic Church) Act of ordering a priest or Bishop, to cease taking part in or performing important services.
  - To stop or prevent somebody for a while from discharging duties that go with his or her position, job or employment in order to investigate suspected or alleged misconduct etc.
  - An order not to do something esp., as, a punishment in the Roman Catholic church; preventing one from taking part in the important services: a papal interdict.
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5. 'Severally' means

- Separately; differently e.g. Shall we consider these issues severally or all together?
  - More than a few but not very many; repeatedly: e.g. I have severally told you not to touch the radio.
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6. 'To be pressed ' means

- Not to have enough e.g. I'm pressed for time this morning.
  - (Of food) given a firm shape by being packed into a container so as to be easily cut for eating it cold.
  - In urgent need to relieve oneself (piss or empty bowel) e.g. I am so pressed; I have to go out.
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7. 'Sexy' means

- Up to date and attracting a lot of interest e.g. Robotics seems to be a sexy subject at the moment.

- Annoying remarks made about members of the opposite sex.
  - Exciting in a sexual way e.g. You look very sexy in those jeans.
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8. 'A bursary' means

- The office of a person in college or school who is responsible for the accounts; a bursar's office.
  - A scholarship or financial assistance accorded to a needy student or scholar to facilitate the pursuit of knowledge.
  - Money from international donors to assist in putting up schools.
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9. To 'assume' means

- To believe (something) to be true without actually having proof that it is so; suppose: e.g. 'we can't just assume her guilt'
  - Ignore; pretend not to have seen or recognized a person: e.g. I tried to greet her but she assumed me.
  - To fail to accept other people's opinions
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10. 'Thrice' means

- Three times: e.g. we ate meat thrice a week.
  - Watchfully: cautiously.
  - Highly, greatly e.g. she is thrice blessed.
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11. 'To criss-Cross' means

- To mark something e.g. a paper with lines that cross e.g., He wanted a sheet criss-crossed with pencil marks.
  - To form lines crossing each other on a parcel of land etc., e.g., Railway lines criss-cross in a dense network.
  - To move extensively to different parts in order to gather information, campaign, educate the public; propagate an ideology or policy, etc.
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12. 'Presently' means

- In a short time; soon e.g. The doctor will be here presently.
- At present; now e.g. The doctor is presently writing a book.
- In the presence of many people; in the open.

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13. 'A saloon' means

- A grandly furnished room for the social use of ship passengers.
  - A large public drinking place esp., in an American town.
  - A hairdressing shop; a stylish or fashionable small shop esp. where services rather than goods are sold.
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14. 'To rewind' means

- To get something e.g. tape to its earlier state as desired. e.g., He rewound the cassette to the beginning
  - To repeat a class or course in a school or college: e.g., He was made to rewind his second year.
  - To put a process to an abrupt end; stop.
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15. 'Otherwise' means

- A part from that: e.g. we arrived late but otherwise the journey was enjoyable.
- An alternative, another option e.g. we'll rely on our school bus because we have no otherwise.
- A means of succeeding

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16. 'To hibernate' means

- To keep away from the public in order to rest e.g. where is the chairman hibernating?
- To prevent somebody from being seen after initiation e.g. The Morans hibernated upon their graduation.
- (Of some animals) to be or go into a state like a long sleep during the winter.

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17. 'To clear' means

- To complete, finish up or be through with an exercise task or process:  
e.g., He has cleared his university studies.
  - To be honest, tell the truth e.g. Being clear is an important virtue.
  - To kill, murder e.g. He cleared his neighbour in a second and took off to  
an unknown place.
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18. 'To retrench' means

- To reduce the amount of money spent; e.g. retrench one's expenditure.
  - (Of a government or business) to arrange to spend less, cut costs.
  - (Of government, firm, organization) to lay off workers against their wish  
before they are due for retirement.
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19. 'Avail' means

- To avail oneself of make good or profitable use e.g. I availed myself of  
this opportunity to improve my English.

To make something or oneself available; , present something or oneself: able to be had, seen, obtained or used e.g. All students should avail their receipts for scrutiny.

To be of use or advantage.

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20. 'Dues' means

Charges or fees for membership of a club: e.g. Those who don't pay their dues will be deregistered.

That which is owed to somebody and should be given or paid by right i.e. salary; e.g. The workers wanted their dues paid in full.

Money that should be paid by somebody as a result of a court order.

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21. 'Upcoming' means

With a promising future, signs showing likely success or popularity, likely to succeed e.g., Jane is an upcoming athlete.

About, likely to happen e.g. The upcoming elections will be free and fair.

Somebody or something that is coming e.g. the upcoming train is full.

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22. 'Rhyme' means

- Things that look alike e.g. their shirts rhyme in colour.
  - To arrange for a meeting between business partners
  - To get along with somebody; be friendly to somebody e.g., I don't rhyme with my Maths teacher.
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23. 'A double – decker' means

- A bus with two levels
  - A bed with two levels
  - A sandwich made with three pieces of bread, leaving two spaces that are filled with food.
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24. 'To bounce' means

- (Of a cheque) to be returned by a bank as worthless.

To Fail to get somebody or something at an agreed upon place and time  
e.g. I bounced my brother yesterday.

To hit somebody on the wall

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25. 'To backslide' means

The act of a born-again Christian/convert going back to sinful ways.

To fail to make profit in a business .

To lapse from good ways into one's former bad ways of living e.g. The reformed criminal backslid.

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26. A stake-holder' means

A person chosen to hold the money given by opponents in a race, bet, etc., and give it to the winner at the end.

A person with interest in the progress, success of a venture, enterprise, institution or policy e.g. All stake holders in education are meeting now.

- A person, usually a lawyer, who takes charge of property during the time of a quarrel or sale.
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27. A bicycle taxi' means

- A two wheeled vehicle, which one rides by pushing pedals with his feet.
- A means of transport i.e. bicycle that is hired for a charge that is based on the length and time of the journey: e.g. was compelled to use a bicycle taxi because I was delaying.
- A means of transport used on the borders of any country.
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28. 'To surcharge' means

- To deduct or withhold a part of money or benefits that a group or somebody is entitled to e.g. The KNEC will surcharge examiners who do not hand in institutional property upon completion of marking.
- To suspend payment due to somebody, a group because of failure to comply with rules or direction.



- Demand payment in addition to the usual charge. The tourists were surcharged 10% on the price of the holiday because of unexpected rise in airfares.
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29. 'Upkeep' means

- The means or cost of sustaining oneself or somebody else; money for accommodation, clothes food etc. e.g. The student doesn't have enough money for his upkeep.
- The cost or means of keeping something in good condition and repair; maintenance: e.g., "I can't afford the upkeep of a large house and garden".
- That which enables one to succeed e.g., The upkeep of my race during the Olympics is attributed to vigorous practice.
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30. 'To off-Set' means

- To clear bills, debts e.g., I am planning to offset the hospital bill by the end of the month.
  - To compensate for something: balance something e.g. He increased his prices to off-set the rising cost of materials.
  - To make something start, initiate e.g., They have off-set a major fundraising.
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31. 'Dowry' means

- The property and money a woman brings to her husband's family in marriage.
  - The property and money a man brings to his wife's family in marriage.
  - The property or money seized from a woman or her family after divorce.
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32. 'Torch' means

- A small hand-held electric lamp powered by a battery.
- A mass of burning, material tied to a stick and carried by hand to give light.

- To set something on fire deliberately or purposely e.g. People's houses were torched during the infamous land clashes.
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33. 'A pastoralist' means

- One who survives on livestock farming, feeds sheep, goats, cattle etc. ,on pasture for survival.
- A leader who performs religious duties; makes pastoral visits.
- One who sells cattle, sheep and goats for survival.
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34. 'Majorly' means

- Mainly, chiefly, principally e.g., The meat that is consumed in Nairobi majorly comes from the central province region.
- Certainly, without doubt of course.
- In most cases, regularly

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35. 'Beetle' means

- Any many kinds of insect with hard wing coverings
  - A type of small German car made by the Volkswagen Company
  - To hurry, to go quickly to avoid being noticed; she beetled off early last night.
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36. 'A Torch-bearer' means

- One who represents a group, party, country in a competition e.g., The is the party's torchbearer in the presidential race.
  - One who takes responsibility of failure on behalf of the entire group , organization firm, or company e.g., I will not always be the torch- bearer as others watch.
  - One who knows and holds the secrets to the success of the company.
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37. 'To land' means

- To catch or secure e.g., she landed the top job in the company
  - To give, reward somebody
  - Arrive; reach a place e.g. when we landed home , the guests were just leaving.
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38. To be 'saved' means

- To be born again, accept Jesus as saviour, converted to evangelical Christianity
  - Allowed to join a group or club.
  - Granted favours, concessions in a competitive venture.
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39. 'Upstairs' means

- An upper floor of a house.
- A piece of land on a slope.
- Of human intelligent e.g., John is very smart upstairs .

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40. 'To Tarmac' means

- To over road's surface with a mixture of tar and very small stones.
  - To look for employment esp. after completing studies.
  - To walk long distance in search of basic necessities.
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41. 'To Pocket' means

- To put into one's pocket e.g., He pocketed his wallet and car keys.
  - To have total control or influence over somebody's decision and behaviour e.g., The councillor has pocketed the area M.P.
  - To take, keep money dishonestly.
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42. 'A street- girl' means

- A prostitute who stands or walks about in the street to attract customers.
  - A female child who has run from home and lives on the street
  - A female child hired by businessmen to sell articles on the streets for them.
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43. 'A safari' means

- A trip through wild country esp. East or Central Africa, hunting or photographing animals.
  - A park in which large groups of animals are kept.
  - Any trip or journey made from one point to another usually by road, air, rail etc.
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44. 'Learning ' means

- Knowledge acquired from attending classes, being taught, taking examination at school, college or university: e.g., learning was paralyzed due to the lecturers' strike.
- Information or knowledge gained from travelling.
- Knowledge of astrology.

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45. 'A Mobile ' means

- Something that is to be moved; not fixed in one position.
- A handset or gadget with operations that enable it facilitate communication without one having to be static or stay at one point.
- A decoration or work of art made of small models, cards etc, tied to wires or string and hung up so that it is moved by currents of air.

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46. 'To befriend' means

- To act as a friend to somebody who requires help. e.g. They befriended me when I first arrived in school.
  - To get into an intimate relationship with a member of the opposite sex with the purpose to getting married: e.g., He befriended her for two years before getting married to her.
  - To act as a friend generally
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47. 'To escort' means

- To take a social companion, esp. a woman out for the evening.
  - To go or travel with someone or something as a guard or as an honour. e.g. A group of motorcyclists escorted the presidential limousine.
  - To accompany a friend, visitor or companion to a place of his or her desire; a goodwill or courteous gesture of sending off a visitor or guest.
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48. 'A Madam' means

- A respectful way of addressing a woman esp. a customer in a shop e.g. Are you being served madam?
  - A title reserved for professional women
  - A woman who is in charge of a house of prostitute, taking from them some of their payment.
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49. 'Out-grower' means

- A child born out of wedlock.
  - One who has grown out of one's clothes.
  - A small scale farmer commissioned by a factory to grow a cash crop outside its nucleus or premises with the support of that factory: a tea outgrower, a sugarcane outgrower etc.
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50. 'To demarcate' means

- To mark the limits of.....
  - To divide into portions sections.
  - To settle disputes amicably.
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51. 'A lady' means

- A woman of good manners and behaviour or of high social position.
  - Any woman: e.g. I gave the book to that silly lady.
  - A woman of noble rank.
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52. 'Whereby' means

- By means of which: a system whereby we can calculate future costs.
- In that e.g. They formed a club whereby everybody contributes one hundred shillings.
- Where.

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53. 'Transport' means

- A means of travelling, vehicles, train e.g. Public transport was paralysed the whole day.
  - Any amount of money that enables somebody to travel by public means: fare e.g., my father hasn't sent me transport.
  - A ship or aircraft for carrying soldiers or supplies, e.g., The troop transport has a mechanical problem.
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54. 'Mob-justice' means

- A kangaroo court.
  - An attack or harm meted out to a criminal or suspect by a crowd of people
  - A demonstration staged by a crowd of people i.e., a mob.
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