

Lexical Ambiguity in English and Kirika (NKÒRÓÒ)

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Abstract

The English language is one of the most widely spoken and influential languages globally while the Kirika language is an endangered language that is spoken in a part of Rivers state of Nigeria. This paper aims at a comparison of these two languages. This research paper 'Lexical ambiguity in English and Kirika' is aimed at determining lexical ambiguity in both languages. Data for this study were gathered from adult native speakers of Kirika and were analyzed descriptively. The study revealed that both English and Kirika have more homonymous lexemes than polysemous ones.

Keywords: *Language, Meaning, Ambiguity, Lexical ambiguity, Homonymy, Polysemy.*

INTRODUCTION

The human language is said to be very unique because it is generative, recursive and has displacement. It is generative in the sense that it can communicate an infinite number of ideas, recursive because it can build upon itself without limits and uses displacement because it can refer to things that are not directly present.

Sapir (1921,p8) in Ifode (2008, p2) defines language purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas/emotions and desires as well as interact with each other by means of voluntary produced symbols-'He stresses that language is the institution whereby human beings communicate ideas, emotions and desires as well as interact with each other by means of habitually oral, auditory and arbitrary symbols. And so in order for language to fulfill these communicative functions, utterances must convey a message. This is to say that they must have content and the content of these utterances is referred to as its meaning.

In the same vein, Qmego(2011) stated that language and meaning are intricately bound and this is why we often depend on meaning to get our messages across to others.

Locke (1968) as cited in Brown (1996, p 6) explicitly stated that unless a man's words excite same ideas in the hearer which he makes them stand for in speaking he does not speak intelligibly.

This "same idea" between the speaker and the listener referred to by Locke is obstructed by various variables one of which is ambiguity.

According to Empson (2014) the term ambiguity is associated with the word puzzling and perplexing indicating a form of unclarity in the communication process.

The summation of the issues that will be discussed in this paper falls within the scope of semantics. It will therefore be necessary that we briefly look at an overview of the linguistic level of semantics. The level of linguistic inquiry of semantics is generally described as the study of all aspects of meaning encoded in natural languages.

According to Crystal (1997) the search for the meaning of meaning has aroused and maintained the interest of philosophers, psychologist and anthropologists since the time of Plato and Aristotle to the present day.

Ndimele (1996. p,6) says meaning is a phenomenon that can be influenced by different variables. One stretch of utterance can mean different things to different people depending on their background or emotional disposition at the time the utterance is rendered. This is why the intended meaning of an utterance may be different from the meaning perceived by the receiver of the message.

Most scholars agree that it is extremely difficult to say what words mean even though using them appropriately in sentences present no problem. According to them, a word might mean one thing but in an utterance might mean a different thing. Meaning therefore has been described as one of the most ambiguous and most controversial term in the theory of language. (Omega 2011, p.21).

When a word or group of words is capable of having more than one interpretation, that word or group of words is said to be ambiguous. If it has to do with words it is categorized under lexical ambiguity but if it concerns more than a word, say a phrase, a clause or a sentence, then it falls under structural ambiguity. This means therefore that ambiguity can be lexical or sentential.

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

The English language was first spoke in England about 1,500 years but it is claimed to have been in existence before then. Geographically, the English language has its origin in north-western Germany, and was brought from there to England by the Anglo-Saxons. Its origin covers a vast period, extending from the earliest times down to 1066 AD, which is regarded as a key date in the history of English language (David 2019).

English is one of the major languages of the world which has gained for itself a global recognition and acceptance. Numerically, it is said to be the second widely spoken language of the world and also the language of colonialism as the British had colonized many countries of the world including Nigeria.

LINGUISTIC CLASSIFICATION OF KIRIKA

Kirika has been classified as an eastern Ijo dialect (Jenewari 1989; Williamson and Blench 2000). A branch coordinate with the dialect cluster of Kalabari, Ibani and Okirika.

Eastern Ijo is a branch of Ijoid, a small family belonging to the Niger Congo phylum and spoken in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Ijoid consist of two coordinate branches; Defaka and Ijo with the Ijo language cluster comprising four isolated dialects and three dialect cluster defined in terms of mutual intelligibility. There is no mutual intelligibility between Defaka and Ijo. Although Ijoid is closely related internally, it is quite distinct from all other Niger-Congo families. (Obikudo 2013).

Below is a language classification tree for the Ijoid languages.



Classification of Proto-Ijoid (Williamson and Blench 2000:20)

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Some linguists and scholars have in their different ways tried to describe the term 'Ambiguity'. As stated by Wilkinson (2006), an expression is said to be ambiguous when a word, term notation, sign, symbol, phrase, sentence or any other form used in communication can be interpreted in more than one way. Crystal (1997) in defining ambiguity states that it is a word or sentence which expresses more than one meaning. In his own description, Cann (1993, p.3) states that ambiguity can be caused through the ascription of multiple meaning to a single word and also through the use of certain expressions that may have different semantic scope. Ejele (1996) suggests that ambiguity arises when a word or a sentence has more than one meaning; when it relates to a word, it is called lexical ambiguity; when it relates to a phrase, it is called phrasal ambiguity and when it relates to a sentence, it is called sentential ambiguity.

From the above views, descriptions and definitions of the various scholars, we can observe that one thing is common and cuts across and that is the idea of ambiguity being characterized with multiplicity of meaning' of words, phrases or sentences. Omego (2011) and Ndimele (1997) have categorized ambiguity into two; Lexical and structural ambiguity, while Ullman (1962) recognizes three types of ambiguity which is phonetic, lexical and grammatical ambiguity. Not so far from this is what Ejele (1996) has recognized as structural, lexical and sentential ambiguity.

Lexical ambiguity as stated in Omego (2011) takes place when a single word can mean several things. She presents the example;

'She went to the bank'

This could mean she went to a financial institution or that she went to the river bank.

On the other hand, Omego also states that structural ambiguity is that type of ambiguity which arises not from a word having two or more meaning but from one word modifying another word. She went on to give the following example to illustrate her description.

'The old men and women left'

This could be implied as 'old' modifying men and women and on a second implication as modifying only men.

Nwala (2015) says lexical ambiguity is ambiguity at the word level and that it results when a word in a sentence makes the sentence to have more than one meaning. He went further to say words that usually cause this double interpretation of expression are usually polysemous. He gave some examples with the words; bank, glasses and head. He said these words give more than one meaning or interpretation each in the sentences (a), (b) and (c) respectively, hence they become ambiguous.

- a) I just returned from the bank
- b) I am going to buy glasses in the market
- c) Your head needs some medical attention

STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES

This paper seeks to provide a principled account of ambiguity in English and Kirika as it relates to homonymy and polysemy. It seeks to identify those lexemes that cause ambiguity in some expressions, analyze the parts of speech that can be lexically ambiguous, determine the most dominant type of lexical ambiguity in both languages and then find out methods through which disambiguation is done in both languages.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study utilizes the Contrastive Analysis theory and the Use or Contextual theory of meaning. The contrastive analysis theory is said to have been propounded by structural grammarians. This theory was developed as a way of tackling issues or problems language learners may come across in language learning and teaching. It is seen by many scholars as a tool for contrasting the similarities and dissimilarities of two languages and also to predict the challenges the L2 learner may encounter in learning a target language. Johnson (1975) views contrastive analysis as the contrasting of a series of a statement about the similarities and differences between two different languages. However this theory has been greatly criticized based on the fact that it can actually not proffer solutions to the predicted challenges or problems.

The use or contextual theory on the other hand is said to be one of the last theories of meaning to become known.

Bronislaw Malinowski and Ludwig Wittgenstein are the major proponents of the Use or Contextual theory, although Malinowski was the first to propose the theory.

Malinowski argues that language should not be studied devoid of context. He observed from his illustration of an utterance of a native in the Trobriand Islands who was talking about a canoe, trip and the superiority of his canoe, that such an utterance is incomprehensible unless it is placed into its cultural setting and related to the circumstances in which it occurs. In his words, language is essentially rooted in the reality of the culture, the tribal life and customs of the people and it cannot be explained without constant reference to these broader contexts of verbal utterance” (Omego 2011).

Wittgenstein in Omego (2011) on the other hand went further to assert that we can establish the meaning of a word in observing its use in language. What he meant was that the meaning of a word equals its use. According to him, “it is silly or a serious mistake to regard meanings as entities rather the meaning of any linguistic expression (be it a word, a phrase or a sentence) is determined by the context in which it is used.

Again, Wittgenstein in Omego (2011) asserts that language is an instrument and its concepts are also instruments. He compared words to tools in a tool box. The pliers, hammer, saw, rule, screw driver, nails etc. that the functions of these words are as different as the function of the objects.

METHODOLOGY

Research materials like textbooks on English language and dictionaries were consulted and data was collected from fluent adult native speakers of the Kirika language. Direct oral interview was used in eliciting data from native speakers. Data from both languages were further descriptively analyzed.

DATA ANALYSIS

LEXICAL AMBIGUITY IN ENGLISH AND KIRIKA

This section examines lexical ambiguity in English and Kirika. Here the researcher was able to examine homonymy and polysemy in both languages and then subdivided into grammatical categories (word class) such as verbs, nouns and adjectives.

Homonymy in English

In English, linguists have distinguished between two kinds of homonymy. These are homography and homophony. Ejele(1996) states that homography is a term used to describe a situation where a set of lexemes have the same spelling but different pronunciation and different meaning. Homophony on the other hand are words that have the same pronunciation but spelt differently.

Homonymous verbs in English

In English, it is possible to have homonymous verbs but in this case they are called ‘Homophones’ because they are spelt differently, have the same pronunciation but with unrelated meanings.

Below in table 1 are examples of homonymous verbs in English.

Table 1

S/N	Homonymous verbs	Meaning
1	Die /daɪ/	To stop living
	Dye /daɪ/	To change the colour of something
2	Find /faɪnd/	To discover something unexpectedly
	Fined /faɪnd/	(pst) to make someone pay money as an official punishment
3	Tail /teɪl/	The part that sticks out and can be moved at the back of the body of a bird, animal or fish
	Tale /teɪl/	A story created using the imagination

Examples in expressions:

- 1) I don't want to die (b) I want to dye the cloth
- 2) Please find the missing money (b) the woman was fined for her misconduct

From the examples given in the table we observe that all the homonyms are verbs, though spelt differently. A transcription is given to show that the homonyms in each example given have the same pronunciation.

Homonymy in Kirika

When a word has two or more meanings that are not related in any way or very far from each other, that word is referred to as Homonym. In Kirika there are several words which share identical phonological and orthographical features but have meanings that are unrelated.

Words or lexemes that are said to be homonyms in Kirika, can belong to the same word class (noun-noun, verb-verb)-**total homonyms** and can also belong to different word class (noun- verb, noun-adjective)- **partial homonyms**, although they share the same sound form and spelling.

Homonymous verbs in Kirika.

This is a case where words which share the same form belong to the verb class. These are said to be 'total homonyms'. Total homonyms in the sense that they have unrelated meanings but share all other constitutive properties

Table 2

Here we have identified some homonymous verbs in kirika

S/N	Verbs	Gloss
1	m̀bì	‘to rub’
	m̀bì	‘to tolrrerate’
2	kàmbó	‘understand’
	kàmbó	‘catch’
3	gḅín	‘sew’
	gḅín	‘throw’
4	pìghì	‘to turn’
	pìghì	‘to argue’

Table 2 above is a representation of homonymous verbs in Kirika. The verbs share identical orthographic and phonological shape but differ in meanings hence making them ambiguous. The meaning also belong to the same word class.

The following sentences below are used to illustrate the differences in meaning of the verbs.

1(a) I bere wa ibu mbi
1PS case use body rub
‘I tolerated’

2(a) I kambo gha
IPS understand NEG
‘I don’t understand’

3(a) gbú twáyè gḅín
Body wear sew
‘sew the cloth’

4(a) a bere pig̣hi gbari
[3PSF case argue too much]
‘she argues to much’

(b) I pulo wa ibu mbi
1PS oil use body rub
I rubbed it’

(b) I kambo gha
IPS catch NEG
‘I didn’t catch’

(b) m̀gbólú gḅín
stone throw
‘throw the stone’

(b) a okuru mpig̣hi okuyoke
[3PSF cloth turn always]
‘she turns the cloth always’

From the sentences given above we notice the unrelatedness in the meaning of the verbs.

Comparison

The homonymous verbs in Kirika which although have unrelated meanings, have the same spelling and pronunciation. In English, homonymous verbs have unrelated meanings, pronounced the same way but with different spellings.

Table 3

	Homonymous verbs in English	Homonymous verbs in Kirika
1	Words have unrelated meanings	Words have unrelated meanings
2	Words have same pronunciation	Words have same pronunciation
3	Words are spelt differently	Words are spelt the same way
4	Words belong to the same word class	Words belong to the same word class

Homonymous nouns in English

These are homonyms that belong to the noun class. These homonyms are spelt the same way, have same pronunciation and have unrelated meanings. We could classify them under total homonyms because apart from their unrelated meanings they share all other characteristics.

Below are examples of homonymous nouns in English:

S/N	homonymous nouns	Meaning
	BAT/bæt/	An Implement used to hit a ball
	Bat/ bæt /	A nocturnal flying mammal
	Ring/rɪŋ/	A band on a finger
	Ring/rɪŋ/	Something circular in shape
	Rock /rɒk/	A genre of music
	Rock /rɒk/	A stone
	Pen /pen/	A holding area for animals
	Pen /pen/	A Writing Instrument
	Band /bənd/	A Music Group
	Band /bənd/	A Ring

Examples in expressions:

1a) She found her bat before the game started (b) The bat lives on that tree

2a) I love listening to rock music (b) He hit his toe against a rock

3a) She kept the puppy in the pen (b) You need to sign with a pen

Homonymous nouns in Kirika

As stated earlier, this is also a case of total homonyms in the language. Below are examples of homonymous nouns in Kirika;

Table 5

S/N	NOUNS	GLOSS
1.	kô	‘remnant’
	kô	‘sea trap’

2.	fúró	‘thief’
	Fúró	‘odour’
3.	kúró	‘a particular tree’
	kúró	‘a basket for preserving fish’
4.	jírí	‘book’
	jírí	‘cooking leaf’
5.	àlilá	‘zinc’
	àlilá	‘plate’
6.	bǐ	‘eye ball’
	bǐ	‘coconut’
7.	àrì	‘medicine’
	àrì	‘witch’

The examples in table 5 above show homonymous nouns in Kirika. We observe from the list that the nouns in Kirika have different meaning in their gloss. These meanings are unrelated even if they share the same phonological and orthographic structure.

Below are some sentences to show the homonymous nouns and how they are used, thereby showing the differences in the meaning of the nouns.

- 1) kô
 - (a) kem kô muye
[This remnant thing]
‘This is the remnant’
 - (b) kēm kô
[this trap]
‘This is trap’
- 2) fúró
 - (a) mí shiè fúró
[This bad odour]
‘This odour is bad’
 - (b) mí fúró shiè
[this thief bad]
‘This thief is bad’
- 3) kúró
 - (a) mī tin kuru olomsuk
[This stick tree old PST]
‘This tree is old’
 - (b) mī inji kuru olomsuk
[this fish basket old PST]
‘This basket is old’
- 4) jírí
 - (a) á jírí m gbè sùk
[3PSF book DEF take PST]
‘She took the book’
 - (b) á fúló túò jírí m gbè sùk
[3PSF soup cook leaf DEF take PST]
‘She took the leaf’

We observe from the sentences given in examples 1-4 above that the homonymous nouns in Kirika can be disambiguated by the addition of extra linguistic information before or after the noun to show difference in meaning.

See example 3 for instance, ‘tín’ and ‘inji’ are added to the noun ‘kúru’ in both sentences to show which ‘kúru’ is being referred to, whether it is the ‘particular tree’ or the ‘basket used for preserving fish’

Another instance is example 4, ‘jírí’ can either mean book or ‘leaf (for cooking)’ when standing alone. In order to know the meaning of the noun in the expression something needs to be added to decipher what is being meant. We see in the (b) sentence of example 4 ‘fúlótúò’ is added before ‘jírí’ to show that it is the ‘cooking leaf and not the ‘book’ that is being referred to.

Comparison

Under this classification the homonym of English and kirika seem to be very similar, in that the homonymous words have the same pronunciation, are spelt the same way, belong to the same word class and of close have unrelated meanings.

Table 6

	Homonymous nouns in English	Homonymous nouns in Kirika
1	Words have unrelated meanings	Words have unrelated meaning
2	Words have same pronunciation	Words have same pronunciation
3	Words are spelt the same way	Words are spelt the same way
4	Words belong to the same word class	Words belong to the same word class

Homonymous Noun- Verb in English

In English language, homonyms can belong to different word class. This is to say one of the meanings can belong to the noun class and the other meaning can belong to the verb class.

Below are some examples of homonymous noun-verbs in English.

Table 7

S/N	Homonymous noun-verb	Meaning
1	Rose /rəʊz/ (N)	A flower
	Rose / rəʊz / (V)	To have gotten up
2	Stalk /stɔ:k/ (N)	A part of a plant
	Stalk /stɔ:k/ (V)	to harass or follow someone
3	Address /ədres/ (N)	A location
	Address/ədres/ (V)	To speak to
4	Tie /taɪ/ (N)	A long narrow piece of cloth worn around the neck
	Tie /taɪ/ (V)	To fasten with rope
5	Watch /wɒtʃ/ (N)	A small type of clock worn on the wrist
	Watch/wɒtʃ (V)	To look at something for a time paying attention to what happens

Examples in expressions:

la) I have a rose in my garden (b) She rose from her seat

2a) Cut off the stalk (b) Don't try to stalk me

Homonymous Noun-Verb in Kirika

As stated earlier, this is an instance in Kirika where lexemes which share the same phonological and orthographic form belong to different word classes; partial homonyms.

Table 8

S/N	NOUN	VERB
1.	Òkòlò 'creek'	Òkòlò 'to shout' 'to shout'
2.	Ówú 'mascurade' 'mascurade'	Ówú 'cry'
3.	Fì 'death' 'death'	Fì 'eat' 'eat'
4.	Fìrì 'leakage' 'leakage'	Fìrì 'to work' 'to work'
5.	Gbòm 'a particular fish' 'a particular fish'	Gbòm 'to deep inside soup' 'to deep inside soup'
6.	Námá 'meat' 'meat'	Námá 'to mend net' 'to mend net'

From the examples given in the table 8 above, we observe that both the noun and the verb have the same sound form and spelling but have unrelated meanings.

Comparison

From the examples of the homonymous noun-verbs in English and Kirika, we observe that there seem to be no dissimilarity at all, in that in both languages the homonyms have same pronunciation, are spelt the same way, belong to the different word class and have unrelated meanings.

Table 9

	Homonymous noun/verbs in English	Homonymous noun/verbs in kirika
1	Words have unrelated meanings	Words have unrelated meaning
2	Words have same pronunciation	Words have same pronunciation
3	Words are spelt the same way	Words are spelt the same way
4	Words belong to different word class	Words belong to different word class

Homonymous Noun-Adjective in Kirika

This is also a situation where the lexemes share the same phonological and orthographic forms but are different in their grammatical categories.

Below are examples of noun-adjective homonyms in Kirika.

Table 10

S/N	NOUN	ADJECTIVE
1.	bôyè 'monkey'	bôyè 'forbidden'
2.	Shiè 'whitlow'(finger or toe nail infection)	shie 'bad'
3.	Ókù 'lice'	ókù 'heavy'

We observe from the examples given in table 10 on the homonymous noun-adjective in Kirika that although they share the same form and pronounced the same way, they belong to different word class and have unrelated meanings.

In English however, there seem to be no category like this in the literature where the homonymous word can be a noun and an adjective.

Polysemy in English

A word is usually said to be polysemous if that word has two or more meanings which are related with one original and general meaning from which subsidiary sense spread out.

Crystal (1997.p,297) defines polysemy as “a term used in semantic analysis to refer to a lexical item which has a range of different meanings”

He went further to give as example for polysemy the lexical item "plain' which could mean 'clear', 'unadorned', 'obvious' etc.

The several related meanings of a polysemous word must belong to a common semantic field, ie the several meanings belong to a common core.

Ndimele (1999) also stated that a word which is polysemous has one of these several senses or meanings as central while the other senses or meanings are mere figurative and metaphorical extension of the core sense.

Below are examples of polysemous words in English:

Table 11

S/N	Polysemous word	Related meanings
1	Man /mæn/	a) The human species (i.e. man vs. other organisms) (N) b) The human species (i.e. man vs. other organisms) (N) c) Adult man of the woman species(i.e. man vs.boy) (N) d) To operate or constitute a vehicle or machine(V)
2	Wood /wud/	a) The material made from tree (N) b) A geographical area with many trees(N)
3	Crane / krem/	a) A bird with a long neck (N) b) A type of construction equipment which looks like it has a long neck (N) c) To strain out one's neck (V)
4	Collar /kɒləʔ/	a) Part of a garment that is worn around the neck (N) b) Separate article of clothing worn around the neck (N)

		c) Band of leather put around the neck of an animal(N) d) Metal band joining two pipes or rods (N)
5	Raw /rɔ:/	a) Uncooked (of meat) (ADJ) b) Natural state of materials (Eg. Raw hide) (ADJ) c) Untrained (of person) (ADJ) d) Unhealed (of wound) (ADJ)

From the examples given above in Nos 1-5 of table 11, it is observed that the meanings of the polysemous words are related. All the meanings in 1a-5a are the central meaning while the others are several related meanings which could be metaphorical. Also we observe that polysemous words in English can belong to different word class.

Polysemy in Kirika

In table 12 are some examples of polysemous words in Kirika with their related senses.

Table 12

S/N	Polysemous words	Primary sense	Secondary sense
1.	Kúbú	Heart	a)Depth of sea b)Centre of something/somewhere
2.	ńgbólú	Seed	a) Bullet b) A growth on someone/something
3.	Tárú	Face	a) Front b) Forward
4.	pínā	Clean	Light
5.	Gìgírì	Fool	Stupid
6.	Ogono	Up	a)Heaven b) Storey building

From table 12 above we observe that in Kirika, polysemous words can belong to different word classes, in this case nouns and adjectives. Each word has its primary sense and then its secondary senses. All the derived senses are however related.

The primary sense of the word is usually the sense in which the native speaker of Kirika will first think of when he/she hears the word in isolation.

Below are some sentences containing some of the polysemous words listed in table 12 above;

1. tárú (forward)
tárú lígì
[forward look]
'Look forward'

b) tárú (face)

I tárú nsághā

[1PSP face dirty]

‘My face is dirty’

c) tárú (front)

tárú è títimè

[front Prep sit]

‘sit in front’

2a. kúbú (chest)

mí ì kùbù

[this my chest]

‘this is my chest’

b) kúbú (heart)

ì kúbú ñgbólú ñyó fà

[my heart seed strength finish]

‘my heart is weak’

c) kúbú (sea depth)

tòrú kùbù

[Sea depth]

‘the depth of sea’

3a. ñgbólú (seed)

ngbolu m duo

[seed DEF plant]

‘plant the seed’

b) ñgbólú (bullet)

ñgbólú m wá twā

[bullet DEF put]

‘put the bullet’

c) ñgbólú (growth on someone)

ñgbólú sò ò kòngò e

[growth see his neck Prep]

‘see the growth on his neck’

4a) ògònò (up)

tín ógònò m tándì

[Tree up DEF climb]

‘Climb up the tree’

b) ògònò (heaven)

wá dá ògònò biè tímè ówèì

[our father heaven inside live man]

‘Our father in heaven’

- c) ọ̀gòṇò (storey building)
ọ̀gòṇò wàrí m yìná
[up houseDEF mine]
‘The storey building is mine’

From the expressions given above in sentences 1-4(a-c), it is observed that in order to decipher the meanings of the polysemous word there is need for an addition of some extra linguistic information as seen in example 2 ‘kúbú’ which has ‘chest’ as its primary sense. However, to know if the speaker is referring to ‘heart’, we see the addition of ‘ńgbólú’ (seed). The same applies in example 4 ‘ọ̀gòṇò’. In order to know the different interpretations of ‘ọ̀gòṇò’ we see the addition of ‘tín’ in (4a), ‘bie’ in (4b) and ‘wari’ in (4c).

Another way of disambiguating polysemous words in Kirika is by looking at the environment in which the word occurs, that is to say the context in which the word is used. As seen in example 1 given above.

Disambiguation in English and Kirika

Basically, from all the examples given in English, we can say disambiguation can be done through a structure based ambiguity resolution and lexical association. What we mean is to actually observe the structure where the ambiguous word is found or looking at the context in which the ambiguous word is used.

However, in Kirika disambiguation can be done by; addition or substitution of some extra linguistic information and then the hearer being able to mentally process the meaning of an ambiguous word in an expression based on the context in which the ambiguous word is used.

Conclusion

Lexical ambiguity has been examined in this work using the English and Kirika languages as a case study. Two types of lexical ambiguity namely; homonym and polysemy were recognized in both languages. Examples and illustrations were also given to illustrate the ambiguous elements. We discovered that both languages are rich in homonymous words than polysemous words. Under homonyms, the lexemes can be of the same word class making them total homonyms or can be of different word class making them partial homonyms. The different interpretation of a polysemous word can belong to different word classes though with related meanings in both languages too. Methods of disambiguating ambiguous lexemes in Kirika whether homonyms or polysemy can be through the addition of some extra linguistic information and by observing the context in which the ambiguous word is used while in English, an ambiguous lexeme can become disambiguated by observing the context in which the ambiguous word is used.

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