

AMBIGUITY IN XITSONGA

By

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MINI-DISSERTATION

Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

In

TRANSLATION STUDIES AND LINGUISTICS

In the

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

(School of Languages and Communication Studies)

At the

UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO

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2015

DECLARATION

I HLONGWANA COLFAR declare that this dissertation **AMBIGUITY IN XITSONGA**: has not been previously submitted by me for any degree at this or any other institution, that this is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

SIGNATURE

(C. Hlongwana)

DATE

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to:

My mother, Ms. Mafanato Rose Baloyi,

My father, Mr. Chavani Evans Hlongwana aka 'Champa',

My fiancée, Ms. Refilwe Mosima Mathumo,

My unborn child, Nyiko Langavi Cleavy Hlongwana and

My siblings.

Education is a powerful weapon that can conquer poverty and liberate our lives.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I would like to thank the God almighty for giving me strength to carry on with this study.

I extend my deepest gratitude to my supervisor Dr. SJ Kubayi who always motivated me. His patience, generosity, advice and serenity afforded me an opportunity to focus on my studies. He encouraged me to go on, even in those moments when I was not certain of where I was heading to. Dr I am profoundly grateful. *Ndza mi khensa Tatana. Minkateko hinkwayo a yi mi wele hi malwandla.*

I am also grateful to Dr. JR Rammala who helped me to come up with a meaningful and interesting topic.

Let me also extend my sincere gratitude to the entire staff in the Department of Translation Studies and Linguistics, Mrs. C.M. Mayevu, Mrs. M.J. Mothiba, Mr. T.A. Makamu, Mr. R.E. Nengovela and Mr. M.E. Kgatla in particular. They all made an invaluable contribution to my academic development from my first year at the University of Limpopo.

A special thanks goes to my lovely mom, my hero, Mrs Mafanato Rose Baloyi, for raising me to be a responsible man that I am. She has always believed in me. Without you mom, I would not have reached thus far. *Ndza mi khensa mhani, Xikwembu a xi mi endle hi ti ntswalo.*

This research would not have been completed without the help and support from my colleagues, Mr. L.L Lephala and Mr. N.S Mutavhatsindi in particular, as well as my uncle, Mr. Lucky Baloyi who made my work easier through their unique contributions.

To my fiancée Ms. Refilwe Mosima Mathumo Hlongwana, thank you for helping and cheering me up during the challenging times of completing this dissertation.

To my grandparents, Mackson Dlayani Baloyi aka 'Hundla-Hundla' and Mthavini 'Nwa-Jim Ngoveni Baloyi who kept asking about my progress with this dissertation, *ndza mi khensa vakokwana ndzi ri hoyohoyo mbuyelo hi lowu.*

Without forgetting my ancestors: kokwani Johannes Hlongwana and kokwani Mthavini Nwa Ritsuri, *mi lovile ndza ha ri ntsongo, a ndzi mi tivi hi mahlo ya nyama kambe mimoya ya n'wina a yi etlele hi ku rhula*

To My friends and classmates: Grace Phiri from Zambia, Finky Muhluzani from Zimbabwe, Zwido Sgovo, Elizabbath Maake Rasakanya, John Matlakala and Eny Lewele, thanks to you guys for your lasting contribution.

Lastly, God the great Lord vested powers upon all those people mentioned above. Without you Lord nothing would have happened.

TO GOD BE THE GLORY....

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to investigate ambiguity in Xitsonga. There are many kinds of ambiguity, but the study mainly focuses on lexical and structural ambiguity. Lexical ambiguity occurs at word level and is caused by homonyms (homophones and homographs) and polysemes. Structural ambiguity occurs at sentence level. This kind of ambiguity manifests in the structure of the sentence itself. Data were collected through self-observation as a native Xitsonga speaker. Words and sentences with multiple meanings in Xitsonga were listed and tree diagrams were used to illustrate and disambiguate ambiguity. The study reveals that, like other languages, Xitsonga has words and sentences with double or many meanings.

KEYWORDS

AMBIGUITY, LEXICAL AMBIGUITY, STRUCTURAL AMBIGUITY, HOMONYM, HOMOPHONES, HOMOGRAPHS, POLYSEMES.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

S = Sentence

V = Verb

N = Noun

Adj = Adjective

Conj = Conjunction

Agr = Agreement

NP = Noun Phrase

VP = Verb Phrase

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In everyday life, people use language as a means of communication. They use language for formal communication such as in business and informal communication for social and emotional interaction. Through the use of language, speakers sometimes turn out to be unclear when they utter words and sentences. Words and sentences that are not clear lead the listener to interpret the message inaccurately or in contrast to what the speaker intends. This confusion in words and sentences is known as ambiguity.

The term ambiguity is defined by Richards, Platt & Weber (1985:11) and Hudson (2000: 96) as a phenomenon that occurs when a word, phrase or sentence has more than one meaning or has two distinct meanings. When an utterance has more than one interpretation, it is usually referred to as ambiguous (Mohamed & Mohamed, 2008:10). Bach (1994) states that there are two types of ambiguity that constrain human language communication in everyday life, namely, lexical and structural ambiguity.

No comprehensive research work has been done focusing on the phenomenon of ambiguity in Xitsonga. However, available literature has paid attention to English data. Therefore, the researcher seeks to generate interest in this significant area of semantics by investigating both structural and lexical ambiguity in Xitsonga. Xitsonga is one of the official languages in the Republic of South Africa (Constitution, 1996). The majority of Xitsonga speaking people are found in the Limpopo Province.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

There are two types of ambiguity in a language as identified by Hudson (2000). The first is lexical ambiguity. This type of ambiguity occurs when an individual word or phrase is used (in different contexts) to express two or more different meanings. This type of ambiguity is also known as semantic ambiguity (Hudson, 2000).

Lexical ambiguity is a communication challenge to native speakers of Xitsonga. Needless to say, it will equally prove a challenge to non-native speakers who may like to learn the language. Because of lexical ambiguity, speakers tend to say something that they do not really mean. In such cases, listeners and/or readers will not understand the intended meanings. Baker et al. (2012:1) state that:

Lexical ambiguity occurs when a lexical entry allows a word more than one possible meaning. For example, in a general lexicon, the word 'mat' might refer to a flat article used for protection or support. In the heavy equipment domain, however, the 'mat' in the discourse might be instead the layer or blanket of asphalt that is laid by a paving.

Lexical ambiguity as stated by Haegeman & Gueron (2004), in Mohamed & Mohamed (2008:10), may result from two homonyms occurring in the same structural position, as in: 'He was on his way to the bank'. It may also occur when constituents in larger structures have more than one interpretation according to their internal structures and syntactic positions. The word 'bank' is either a financial institution or the side of a river. Richards et al. (1985:11) also agree that the word 'bank' is the realm of the contexts of putting money in a bank or the side of a river.

Some words in Xitsonga cause ambiguity or misunderstanding because they have more than one meaning. Some of these words are homonymous. Homonyms are a group of words that share the same spelling and the same pronunciation, but have different meanings (Falkum, 2011). Thus, homonyms are simultaneously homographs (that is, words that share the same spelling, irrespective of their pronunciation) and homophones (words that share the same pronunciation, irrespective of their spelling).

The state of being a homonym is called homonymy. An example of homographs is the pair 'stalk' (part of a plant) and 'stalk' (follow/harass a person). Another example is the pair 'left' (that is, past tense of leave) and 'left' (as in the opposite of right) (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homonym>).

The following are other examples of homonyms in Xitsonga:

- (1a) *Matimba*
Strength
Sweet cane

The word *matimba* above has two meanings. It either means 'strength' or 'sweet cane'. The word in (1a) above can create ambiguity in the following structures:

- (1b) *Nhlamulo u na matimba namuntlha.*
Nhlamulo has strength today.
Nhlamulo has sweet cane today.

The sentence (1b) above is ambiguous. The ambiguity is brought about by the word *matimba* which has two unrelated meanings, namely: 'strength' and 'sweet cane'.

- (2a) *Mavele*
Breasts
Corn

The word *mavele* in (2a) above has two meanings. It either refers to 'corn' or 'breasts'. Thus, the structure of the sentence in (2b) below is ambiguous. The ambiguity is caused by the utterance *mavele* which is not clear as to whether it is *maize* being referred to or it refers to *breasts*.

(2b) *Hlulani u tlangisa mavele.*

Hlulani is playing with breasts.

Hlulani is playing with corns.

Another example of lexical ambiguity can be discerned from the polysemy 'face', whose multiple meanings are human face, face of a clock, or cliff face. Polysemy is explained by Falkum (2011) as a single word form that can be associated with several different but related meanings. For example, the word 'run' is polysemous because it has several different but related meanings, as in the following phrases:

(3a) 'Run a half marathon'.

(b) 'Run a shop'.

(c) 'Run late'.

The sentence in 3(a) refers to running in a competition so that one person can come out the winner. This can be a marathon of 10 kilometres. In the sentence 'run' a shop in 3(b) the word 'run' has to do with the management of a business. *Run late* in sentence 3(c) has to do with time dimension.

(4a) *khwiri*

Pregnancy

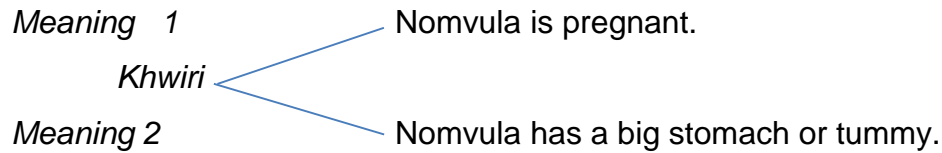
Big stomach

The word in (4a) *khwiri* (pregnancy) (big stomach) is polysemous in Xitsonga. It is polysemous in the sense that it can refer to:

- i. Pregnancy or
- ii. Big stomach or tummy.

The polysemous meanings of the word *khwiri* is illustrated in figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Double meanings of the word Khwiri.



The polyseme *khwiri* can result in ambiguity in the following structure.

- (4b) *Khwiri ra Nomvula i rikulu*
Nomvula is pregnant.
Nomvula has a big stomach.

When the interlocutor says '*Khwiri ra Nomvula i rikulu*', the listener may think of pregnancy while the interlocutor may be referring just to her tummy.

The second type of ambiguity is structural ambiguity. Structural ambiguity exists when two or more meanings of the phrase or sentence are the consequence of a structure. This type of ambiguity can also be referred to as syntactic ambiguity. Structural ambiguity has to do with the grammatical structure of a sentence (Jacob & Rosenbaum, 1968:5, in Fowler, 1987:7). It arises when a given string of words can be described in two different ways, with different meanings (Wasow, 2011:5-6). Other examples of this occur with coordinate constructions, where modifiers or complements on either periphery of the construction can be associated with either the whole coordination or just the adjacent conjunct. This is illustrated in the two sentences below:

- (5) 'The guards let small men and women exit first'.
(6) 'Teachers and students of the speaker received priority seating'.

The word 'small' in (5) may modify just men, or men and women. In (6), of the speaker may be the complement of just *students*, or of *teachers and students*. Other structural ambiguities arise when modifiers have multiple possible attachment sites, even in the absence of coordination (Wasow, 2011:5-6). The sentence in (6) above may mean that the guards let 'small men' and 'small women' exit first or the guards let 'small men' only and 'women' exit first (Wasow, 2011:5-6).

The following examples represent structural ambiguity in Xitsonga:

(7) *Dlayani u hundzile hi movha.*

Dlayani passed by a car.

Dlayani passed by driving a car.

This sentence in (7) [*Dlayani u hundzile*] *hi movha* and *Dlayani u [hundzile hi movha]* above is not clear enough to tell what was happening, that is, whether Dlayani was driving a car to somewhere, or was standing just near the road when the car passed.

(8) *Mundzuku ku ni ntlangu wa vakokwana.*

Tomorrow there is a function for grandmothers.

Tomorrow there is a function for only my grandmother.

The ambiguity of the sentence in (8) above is carried out by the word *vakokwana*, with special reference to **va-**. The prefix **va-** has two meanings. It may be used to show respect to the elders. In Xitsonga, we say *vabava*, *vamhani* and *vakokwana* as in sentence (8) above. It may also be used for plurality. *Kokwana* is in singular form and *vakokwana* is in plural form. The sentence in (8) above states that 'There is a party tomorrow for the grandmothers'. On the other hand, it may refer to the particular granny who will be having a party tomorrow.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

1.3.1 Aim of the study

The aim of the study is to investigate ambiguity in Xitsonga.

1.3.2 Objectives of the study

In order to fulfil the aim of the proposed study, the researcher used the objectives listed below:

- To identify and discuss linguistic expressions that are lexically ambiguous in Xitsonga;
- To investigate structural ambiguity in Xitsonga;
- To differentiate between homonymous and polysemous words in Xitsonga; and
- To analyse the role of contexts in the disambiguation of communication breakdown caused by lexical and structural ambiguity.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study seeks to address the following questions with regard to the investigation of lexical and structural ambiguity in Xitsonga:

- What are the linguistic expressions that are lexically ambiguous in Xitsonga?
- What are the linguistic expressions that are structurally ambiguous in Xitsonga?
- In what ways do homonymy and polysemy cause lexical ambiguity?
- How does context assist in disambiguating sentences?

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Ambiguity, as a language phenomenon, falls within the field of semantics. Although there may be many types of ambiguity, the scope of this study is to investigate and describe two types of ambiguity in Xitsonga: lexical and structural ambiguity. In discussing lexical ambiguity, the researcher first identifies and discusses homonyms and polysemes as causes of lexical ambiguity. Having identified the sources of lexical ambiguity, the study pays attention to structures as manifestation of lexical ambiguity. Structural ambiguity is analysed by scrutinising ambiguity at two levels, namely, phrasal and sentence levels. In addition, the study also discusses the importance of contexts in the disambiguation of ambiguous sentences.

1.6 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The study is important in the sense that it highlights the role of the semantic fields of homonyms and polysemes in bringing about lexical ambiguity in Xitsonga. It also highlights the importance of constructing sentence structures that avoid structural ambiguity in Xitsonga. In addition, the study is important in examining the role of context in disambiguating sentence constructions.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The motive behind the study is to outline challenges with regard to lexical and structural ambiguity in Xitsonga. There are a number of lexical and structural ambiguities in Xitsonga that have not yet been investigated. The study will help professionals such as lexicographers, linguists and translators to construct sentences that are clear of ambiguity and to use contexts sufficiently to avoid ambiguity in their everyday sentence construction. To be able to comprehend any intended meaning, the study hypothesises that the mastering of the sources of lexical and structural ambiguity in Xitsonga, together with the ways of disambiguating, help to ensure successful communication. In addition,

a good understanding of lexical and structural ambiguity in Xitsonga is essential for the teaching and learning of Xitsonga as a language. Similarly, in translating from English into Xitsonga or vice versa, a comprehensive knowledge of lexical and structural ambiguity can help create communicative equivalence in the translation.

1.8 SUMMARY

Ambiguity is one of the fields in semantics which has been studied by linguists and philosophers over the past years. However, Xitsonga has not yet received attention in this regard (ambiguity). The main route to ambiguity is through homonyms and polysemy. These two concepts bring confusion to the speakers and listeners. In their confusion, they ultimately comprehend incorrect information. In the chapter to follow, the researcher reviews related information based on ambiguity in different languages of the world.

1.9 ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

The study consists of five chapters which are arranged in the following order.

Chapter one: this chapter serves as an introduction to the study; it presents an overview on how the study was conducted, including the aims and objectives of the study.

Chapter two: Related literature in other languages is reviewed in this chapter.

Chapter three: this chapter shows how the research was conducted. That is, it focuses on the research methodology of the study. It also explains how data was gathered.

Chapter four: lexical and structural ambiguities in Xitsonga are discussed here. Words and sentences with many meanings are outlined and discussed in detail.

Chapter five: this chapter presents an overview of all chapters, outlines the findings and finally suggests ways of avoiding ambiguity by giving helpful recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to review the literature that pertains to the topic under examination. Literature review is a critical and evaluative account of what has been published on a chosen research topic (<http://portal.fke.utm.my/9161BE0B-5B93-428F-90B1>). Its purpose is to summarise, synthesise and analyse the arguments of others. The researcher should describe and analyse the knowledge that exists and what gaps occur in research related to the field of interest. This should clarify the relationship between the current research and the work that has previously been done. The following crucial aspects in this chapter are dealt with in detail, namely, lexical and structural ambiguity.

2.2 AMBIGUITY

In most cases people use words and sentences that have many interpretations in a language. Many interpretations in words and sentences may cause misunderstanding. Listeners and readers may interpret words and sentences in many ways. When a word or a sentence results in two or more interpretations, such a sentence is ambiguous. Ambiguity can also be brought about by a poorly constructed sentence.

Khawalda and Al-saidat (2012) and Bach (1994) share a common view by defining ambiguity as a term used to describe a word, phrase, or sentence which has more than one interpretation. This definition of ambiguity sees ambiguity as occurring in both the spoken and the written word (Khawalda and Al-saidat, 2012). Bach (1994) further defines ambiguity as a property of linguistic expressions.

Similarly, Nguyễn (2007) states that ambiguity describes the linguistic phenomenon whereby expressions are potentially understood in two or more ways: an ambiguous expression has more than one interpretation in its context. Thus, for ambiguity to take place there must be situations of utterance usage. A sentence is ambiguous when it can be understood in two or more possible senses or ways (Quiroga, 2003).

According to Crystal (1988:15), ambiguity is the reference to a word or sentence which expresses more than one connotation. Connotation has to do with the meaning to which a word might be attached to.

People tend to think of language as a clear and literal vehicle for accurately communicating ideas (Quiroga, 2003). But even when people use language literally, misunderstanding arises and meaning shifts. People can be intentionally or unintentionally ambiguous. Nevertheless, when someone uses a potentially ambiguous word or lexeme, usually the intention is to express only one meaning.

There are three types of ambiguity in a language, namely, phonetic, structural or grammatical ambiguity and lexical ambiguity (Bach, 1994). However, the writer pays much attention to both lexical and structural ambiguity.

2.3 LEXICAL AMBIGUITY

Lexical ambiguity is concerned with multiple interpretations of lexemes. A word is ambiguous if it involves two lexical items that have identical forms, but have distinct, i.e. unrelated meanings (Falkum, 2011). Lexical ambiguity is very common in languages. A single string of words may lead to more than one interpretation simply because one of the words has more than one meaning (Klepousniotou, 2002). Lexical ambiguity means that an individual word or a phrase can be used in different contexts to express two or more different meanings.

An example of lexical ambiguity is as follows:

(9) I saw Rose at the bank yesterday.

The sentence in (9) is ambiguous. The ambiguity is caused by the fact that it can be interpreted in two different ways. The word 'bank' may either denote an organisation providing financial services, or the side of a river. So, the first referential meaning of the word bank that will come to the human mind is the place where a person deposits and withdraws money 'financial institution', whereas the speaker might actually be referring to the 'side of a river'. To disambiguate the sentence above in (9), there is a need to consider a fully contextualised sentence as demonstrated below.

(9a) 'I saw Rose at the bank yesterday in front of the teller machine'.

The sentence is now unambiguous as compared to the one in (9). It is clear that the word 'bank' refers to the financial institution. The added phrase 'in front of the teller machine' modifies the whole meaning of the sentence.

There are two sources of lexical ambiguity, namely, homonyms and polysemy.

2.3.1 HOMONYM AS A SOURCE OF LEXICAL AMBIGUITY

The term homonym is derived from the Greek word homos (homonymous – 'the same' and onoma – 'name') and thus expresses the sameness of a name combined with the difference in meaning (Le Thi Thanh Nhung & Nguyen Ngoc Vu, 2010:2).

Seed (1997) and Lyons (1995) hold that homonym is a group of words that share the same spelling and the same pronunciation but have different meanings. These words are not in any how related but they have similar speech sounds.

They are different words with the same forms. According to scholars, there has been a considerable confusion in using the term homonymy as to whether the identity of the form may apply to speech or writing or both. Crystal (1980) labels these forms half identical in shape. Similarly, Lyons (1977:559) distinguishes between homophony and homograph as two kinds of partial homonymy.

There are two kinds of homonyms namely, absolute and partial homonyms (Lyons 1995 in Nguyễn, 2012). Absolute homonyms satisfy the three conditions of (a) un-relatedness in meaning, (b) identity of all their forms, and (c) identical forms of grammatical equivalence. Grammatical equivalence means that words will be written and pronounced the same way. An example of absolute homonym is the word 'bank' with two different meanings of either 'a business establishment in which money is kept for saving or commercial purposes or is invested, supplied for loans, or exchanged' or 'the slope of land adjoining a body of water, especially adjoining a river, lake, or channel' (Nguyễn,2012).

Partial lexical homonyms are words of the same category of parts of speech that are identical only in their corresponding forms (Le Thi Thanh Nhung and Nguyen Ngoc Vu, 2010:2). Consider the following sentence which explains the ambiguity carried by the word 'lie'

(10) 'Bongani's husband always lies in bed'.

It is clear that the word 'lie' represents two inferences. The husband may at some point lie just to relax and rest on the bed. On the other hand, he may just blow out lies to Bongani every time when he is in bed. Partial homonyms may not satisfy the three conditions as stipulated in absolute homonyms above (Lyons, 1995:55). Lyons gives an example of partial homonym in the verb 'found'. Consider the following example in sentence 11 below.

(11) 'They found hospitals and charitable institutions'.

The word 'found' in this sentence might be understood to mean discover or establish. It can also be used as the past tense of 'find' as in 'found' the hospitals and charitable institutions in a certain place. The two kinds of partial homonyms, namely, homophones (words identical in pronunciation only) and homographs (those identical in spelling only) give rise to lexical ambiguity in case they have the same lexical categories (Nguyễn, 2012). Hence, homonym is divided into two, homographs and homophones.

(a) HOMOGRAPHS

Homographs are words which are written the same way but carry different meanings (Dash, 2010). They are two words that have different pronunciations but have the same spelling (<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/bow>). For example, the word 'bow' refers to an instrument for shooting arrows, and 'bow' which indicates a bending of the body as a form of respectful greeting. The two homographs discussed in this paragraph are a result of homonymic conflict. Homonymic clash (sometimes called homonymic conflict) is a term used to refer to the ambiguity arising from homonyms because of the similarity in spelling and/or pronunciation (Fromkin et al, 2003:180) in (Mohammed and Areej, 2010).

Consider the following examples in Shona.

(12a) *Nzara*

Hunger

Nail

(12b) *Ndine nzara*

I am hungry

I have a nail

The data in (12b) illustrate homographs *Ndine nzara* which can be understood to mean that 'I am hungry or I have a nail'. The following is an ambiguous sentence resulting from the homograph *nzara*:

(12c) *Ndafamba rwendo rwurefu ne nzara.*

I travelled a long way in hunger.

I travelled a long way with nail or nails.

The sentence in (12c) is ambiguous, the ambiguity is brought about by the word *nzara* which has two interpretations. Without a proper supporting context, a ChiShona non-speaker would find it difficult to comprehend the above sentence. This sentence is lexically ambiguous due to the homographic word *nzara*.

The sentence in (12c) above can pose a challenge to both native speakers and non-native speakers of ChiShona language. A native ChiShona speaker will ask the interlocutor questions such as: what kind of *nzara* do you mean? Another person would ask in this way: 'why did you not eat before you left'? A properly constructed sentence which is contextually rich can help in disambiguating sentence (12c) above. Consider the sentence in (12d) below that carries enough contexts to disambiguate the ambiguity in sentence (12c).

(12d) *Ndafamba rwendo rwurefu ne nzara, ndoda kudya.*

I travelled a long way with hunger, now I want to eat.

The sentence in (12d) above carries enough context to explain the meaning of the word *nzara*. One can utter a sentence like *Nzara dzangu dzakurisa* which may either mean 'I am too hungry or my nail is too big'. *Nzara dzangu dzakurisa, ndoda kugurwa* basically means that 'my nails are big, I want to cut them'. The added phrase *ndoda kugurwa* helps to disambiguate the statement. Bach (1994) gives the multiple interpretations of the homographic word 'suit' as demonstrated below:

(13a) 'Suit'

Pieces of clothing

Legal action

The word 'suit' is homographic because in actual fact it has two meanings although it goes with the same spelling. Evidence that the word 'suit' is homographic is provided by

the anomaly of the crossed interpretation of the sentence. In terms of crossed interpretation, 'suit' refers to both an article of clothing and to a legal action. Therefore, the word 'suit' contains ambiguity because it can be interpreted in more than one way. It is apparent that when the homograph 'suit' is used in a sentence, it can create lexical ambiguity. Consider the following sentence which has the word 'suit'.

(13b) 'The tailor pressed a suit'.

A tailor has an ability to cut, fit and modify garments. In this case, 'suit' in (13b) above refers to the act of cutting and modifying garments to make pieces of clothing. Meanwhile, the tailor can as well press a suit to offenders or perpetrators for legal action. Therefore, the sentence in (13b) is not clear. The homographic 'Suit' in the sentence above leaves us with questions in mind. We must always think about others when uttering sentences. A comparison of the sentences in (13c) and (13d) with (13b) may help the reader to see which one is clearer.

(13c) 'The tailor pressed a 'suit' in the municipal court'.

(13d) 'The tailor pressed the 'suit' well in preparation for the wedding on Saturday'.

It is now clear that 'suit' in (13c) has to do with legal action. We are informed by the word 'court' which is defined as "a tribunal, often a governmental institution, with the authority to adjudicate legal disputes between two parties" (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Court>).

In sentence (13d), a tailor uses a sewing machine to prepare a 'suit' for the groom on Saturday. In that sentence, we are informed by the word 'wedding'. So, for comparison purposes, the sentence in (13c) and (d) above are disambiguated and are clearer as compared to (13b).

Quiroga-Clare (2003) attests to the fact that most words in all languages have the potential of being ambiguous. Consider the following word in IsiNdebele.

(14). *Ikhabe*

Watermelon

Ambidexterity

The word *ikhabe* has more than one meaning. This may result in lexical ambiguity if used in some contexts. The ambiguity of the homographic word *ikhabe* can be seen in the following sentence:

(14a). *uSipho likhabe.*

Sipho is a watermelon.

Sipho is an ambidextrous.

The sentence in (14a) has two different interpretations because of the homograph *ikhabe* which refers to both a watermelon and an ambidextrous person. Ambidexterity refers to a person who is able to use both hands. The sentence is not clear even to people who speak IsiNdebele. Without further explanation of, or supporting context to back up the meaning of the word *ikhabe*, the sentence remains ambiguous.

The sentence is ambiguous due to homonic conflict or homonic clash carried by the word *ikhabe*. When people hear such sentences as those in (14) above, they are likely to laugh because it sounds like a joke. Referring to a person as a watermelon, it means he/she is sweet or light in complexion because a watermelon is red inside, or even having a round big head. Sipho might at some point be angry thinking that the speakers are teasing him or making a mockery out of him, forgetting the homonic clash of the word *ikhabe*, meanwhile they might be praising him for the ability of using both hands interchangeably. It will therefore always be problematic to comprehend such sentences. To avoid such proper sentence construction is very much essential in everyday life.

A problem of multiple meaning in words is a communication challenge (Chokoe, 2000:10) hence understanding one another is a lot more complicated than people would think. Chokoe further says that it would be good if words had exact, static meanings, and if words clearly referred to one idea or thing. He argues that if people would learn and master these words, each individual would use them in exactly the same way, and we

would all agree on what to call things. Instead, people use different words in their daily discourse. People have to work hard to reach some kind of agreement.

Quiroga (2003) asserted that ambiguity is a property of most languages in the world. In Tshivenda there is:

- (15). *Thoho*
Head
Monkey

The word *thoho* in (15) possesses two different meanings. These meanings can bring confusion in a place where a segment lacks supporting context. In the sentence:

- (15a) *Hei thoho ndi khulwanesa*
This monkey is too big.
This head is too big.

The sentence above is ambiguous because the speaker might be referring to a person while the listener concludes that he is referring to a monkey. Any sentence that is uttered containing the word *thoho* must be provided with full context to limit or avoid homonic conflicts. This sentence can be disambiguated as follows:

- (15b) *Hei thoho ndi khulwanesa a i koni na u tshimbila.*
This monkey is too big it cannot even walk.

The added phrase '*a i koni na u tshimbila*' is a supporting context which disambiguates the sentence in (15a) above.

- (15c) *Hei thoho ndi khulwanesa na mungadzi a u dzheni.*
This head is too big even a cap cannot fit in.

The sentence is no longer confusing like the sentence in (15a). It is now clearer that the word *thoho* means head. The sentence is modified by the added phrase *mungadzi a u dzheni* which makes it different from *thoho* the monkey.

In Sepedi, homographs include nouns:

- (16) *Lewa*
Corn
Cave

The word '*lewa*' above consists of two different meanings. The referent *lewa* is planted in the farm but it can also refer to a cave. In order to comprehend the ambiguity brought by the word *lewa*. It is important to consider the following sentence in (16a).

- (16a) *Lewa le ke le legolo.*
This corn is big.
The cave is big.

The sentence in (16a) above is ambiguous because of the word *lewa* which means this cave is big or this corn is big. As stressed in the above discussions, a supporting context is always imperative. In a sentence such as:

- (16b) *Lewa le ke le legolo a ke kgone go le kuka.*
This corn is big I cannot carry it or pick it up.

The added phrase *a ke kgone go le kuka* makes it different from the one that refers to the word 'cave'. It is common sense that no one can carry a cave since it is established as part of the ground. The sentence in (16b) is not ambiguous anymore because of the added phrase *a ke kgone go le kuka* which modifies the whole statement. In ChiChewa language spoken in Zambia and Malawi, there are some words that suffer homonymic clashes resulting in the word being homographic which will eventually cause ambiguity. Consider the following word:

(17) *Chicinsi*

Hair

Secret

Consider the following statement with the word *chicinsi*:

(17a) *Ulina chicinsi.*

You are so secretive.

Your hair is long.

To avoid ambiguity brought about by the word *chicinsi*, linguistic information is given. We need to consider the following statement to see if or whether the ambiguity still prevails:

(17b) *Ulina chicinsi sabe maniuza kudala.*

You are so secretive because you should have told me long time ago.

It is now clear that the speaker is only referring to *chicinsi* as a secret. Meanwhile in the sentence below:

(17c) *Ulina chicinsi yabwino.*

You have beautiful hair.

The sentence cannot be contradicting anymore because in a language there is nothing such as a beautiful secret. Therefore, *chicinsi* refers to hair.

(18) 'Pupil'

Eye

Person (learner))

The word may refer to a person, especially a child who is being taught in the lower grades of schooling or the small back round opening in the middle of the coloured part of the eye. The word or lexeme 'pupil' can bring about ambiguity in written form. Consider the following sentence:

(18a) ‘Mrs Baloyi’s pupil was injured in the soccer tournament’.

The word pupil has different implications because if we knew Mrs Baloyi as a school teacher it would not be difficult to interpret the sentence above. It would be clear to a person who knew Mrs Baloyi to say that was her school kid who got injured. It could also be that Mrs Baloyi was part of the team in the field, and then it happened that she got injured in her eye, particularly the pupil. But in the case where we do not know about Mrs Baloyi’s profession, the sentence above brings ambiguity between a school child and part of the eye. The ambiguity is caused by the word ‘pupil’.

Even if we can think of shortening the sentence above by removing (was injured in the soccer tournament), the sentence would still be ambiguous. Reference is made to the following sentence or phrase.

(18b) ‘Mrs Baloyi’s pupil’.

The sentence above is still ambiguous. However, it either refers to Mrs Baloyi’s school kid or her eye. Nevertheless, the possession indicates that the ‘pupil’ belongs to Mrs Baloyi.

Cases of homonymy appear in most languages in the world. Dash (2002) in Dash (2010) discusses ambiguous words in Bengali below:

- 1) *Chabiṭā ṭebiler māthāy rākho* ‘Keep the picture on the table’
- 2) *Tomār kathāṭā āmār māthāy ache* ‘Your word is in my mind’
- 3) *Tin diner māthāy tini phire elen* ‘He returned by the beginning of the 3rd day’

The examples given above show that the word *māthā* in Bengali is multi-semantic in function because it is used in three different senses: in (1), it means ‘top of a table’, in (2), it implies ‘mind of a person’, and in (3), it indicates ‘beginning of a day’. In each case, the actual implied sense of the word is not difficult to retrieve because its immediately preceding and succeeding words help to understand its actual contextual sense. However, since the word *māthā* is not limited to only three different senses, it has many more senses in the language depending on its contexts of use (Dash, 2002).

Dash (2002) asserts that most words comprising homonic clash are not problematic because of the immediate preceding word. The issue of immediate preceding word is similar to a given sentence which is fully contextualised. By implication, Dash suggests that enough context helps in disambiguating sentences.

(b) HOMOPHONES

When two or more words are different in origin and signification and are pronounced alike, whether they are alike or not in the spelling, they are said to be homophonous of each other (Dash, 2002). Such words, if spoken without context, are ambiguous. A homophone is a Greek word meaning same sounding. Homophones differ in spelling and are as well different words. Homophones are two words that share the same sound (phonology), but differ in spelling (orthography) and meaning (semantics) (Mish, 1991, in (White and Abrams, 2007). The following words are homophonous:

(19a) 'Desert'

A very dry area with not much trees.

(19b) 'Dessert'

Cream which is usually sweet or anything served after meal.

Using the homophones above, it is possible to construct an ambiguous sentence, as follows:

(19c). I like 'deserts' / 'desserts' more than anything else in the world.

A reader must, however, be well-informed about the different meanings of the words 'deserts' and 'desserts'. The challenge will be encountered in spoken contexts where enough supporting statements are not given. In this case, the two words will result in lexical ambiguity.

Other examples of homophones are as follows:

(20). 'Beach' is an area of accumulated sand, stone, or gravel deposited along a shore by the action of waves and tides (<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/beach?s=t>).

(21a) 'Beech' (a tree which grows in European side of the world, used for firewood and its leaves for nourishing beers). (<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/beach?s=t>).

(21b) 'Bitch' (female dog)

The meanings of the three words 'beech', 'beach' and 'bitch' may pose a problem in spoken language where a person would not know what is being referred to. Consider the following sentences:

I do not like beaches.

I do not like beeches.

I do not like bitches.

The sentences above are ambiguous in the spoken form. This is because the three words sound the same. Although they are spelt differently, in spoken form, they sound similar. This similarity in sound may result in ambiguity in the spoken form.

Homophones in English can also be seen in the following two words:

(22) 'Sweets' and 'suites'

Consider the sentence below:

(22a) My brother likes sweets/suites.

The sentence above is lexically ambiguous because the forms 'sweets' and 'suites' have the same pronunciation /swi:ts/ but different meanings: 'sweet' meaning 'a small piece of

sweet food made of sugar or chocolate’, etc. and ‘suite’ meaning ‘a set of matching furniture for a room’. They are homophones because they have the same sound or pronunciation (Nguyễn, 2012).

2.4 POLYSEMY AS SOURCE OF LEXICAL AMBIGUITY

When a word has multiple meanings that are related conceptually or historically, it is said to be polysemous (Fromkin, et al, 2007). Crystal (1980) defines a polysemic word as a lexical item which has a variety of meanings used in semantic analysis. According to Fellbaum (2000:52) in Dash (2011), in polysemy a particular word exhibits variations of its sense depending on the context of its use. A case of polysemy is, according to Hurford and Heasley (1983:123), a word which has two or more closely related senses. Nguyen (2012) further adds that polysemy is the ambiguity of an individual word or phrase that can be used in different contexts to express two or more different meanings.

A polysemous word has a direct sense from which other senses can, in semantic analysis, be derived by assuming that they are characterised by some added connotation, or by the sense being figurative, or similarly by transference and specialisation (Ndlovu & Sayi, 2010) in Zgusta (1971).

In simple terms, Ndlovu & Sayi (2010) in Zgusta (1971) implies that polysemous words have multiple related meanings. Words that are polysemous have more than three related meanings. Due to multiple related meanings in words, people tend to use these words figuratively. Natural languages have a set of words that are capable of conveying multiple objects, ideas, and senses both in their context-bound and context-free situations. This particular feature of words allows a user to derive more than one sense that may differ in terms of lexical feature, morpho-syntactic feature, sub-categorisation feature, semantic feature, lexical selectional feature, idiomatic usage, proverbial usage, and figurative usage (Sinclair, 1991:105) in (Dash, 2011). It is evident that polysemy brings about ambiguity.

2.4.1 SOURCES OF POLYSEMY

Below are factors which make words to endue polysemous senses. in this section the researcher discusses underlying factors which lead to words being polysemous.

- (a) Homonyms reinterpreted
- (b) Foreign words
- (c) Figurative language
- (d) Shifts in application and;
- (e) Specialisation in a social milieu.

There are many ways in which polysemy can arise. However, the most common ones are listed above. The researcher will give a brief definition of each. later, he will discuss examples of how these factors influence polysemy in Xitsonga.

(a) Homonyms re-interpreted

What is meant by homonyms re-interpreted is that polysemy may arise through a special form of popular etymology (etymological point of view by the speaker). When the difference between lexical items, which are identical in sound and spelling, is not very great, i.e. it seems to be like a relation in sense. From a historical point of view, these lexical items are homonyms because they belong to different origins and sources, while the modern speaker, without paying attention to the etymological rules, may feel that there is a kind of relation between them on some psychological basis (Hasan, 2005).

The writer asserts that words were initially homonymous based on their origin. However, due to homonyms reinterpreted, some words have become polysemous. Hasan (2005) and Choke (2000) are of a similar view when they say this type of polysemy is uncommon, confusing and doubtful since the examples are more homonymous than polysemous. This

is due to the nature of nearness between the different meanings (Hasan, 2005). Consider the following word in North Kurmanji Kurdish.

- (23) *Sah*
King
Happy

The word *Sah* above can either mean a king or being happy. The focus is on how one should treat the word in Kurdish. This pair of words has unconnected meanings and different origins. Therefore it should be treated as homonyms while modern speakers see a metaphorical connection between them and thus, they are considered to be polysemous words.

(b) Foreign words

This is due to the nature of the deep economical, political, military and cultural relations between languages. One could refer to the influence of some foreign languages such as Arabic, Persian and Turkish on Kurdish (Hasan, 2005).

One of the many ways in which a language can influence another is by changing the meanings of existing words. When the borrowed sense remains alongside the new, the case of polysemy may arise. Most African languages are influenced by English and Afrikaans. When two cultures come into contact, they form the so called acculturation, that is, the fusion of two or more cultures. During this process, one culture becomes dominant over another, and thus the dominated one acquires more from the dominant one (Chokoe, (2000). Chokoe (2000), further gives the following example in Afrikaans to Sepedi.

- (24) *Werk*

The word *werk* means to work and it has been adopted by many African languages. Amongst other is the Sepedi *bereka*. The word *bereka* from the Afrikaans *werk* has

retained its meaning of working. However, there are a number of other meanings which can be attached to the word *bereka*. As highlighted in the sentence below.

(24a) *Ke tla go bereka.*

I will work you.

I will beat you.

I will have sex with you.

The polysemous word *bereka* therefore can lead to ambiguity in the sentence given above.

(c) Figurative language

A large number of polysemous words arise through figurative language, especially metaphor. Fromkin *et al.* (1988: 236) in Hasan (2005) argue that metaphorical use of language is language creativity at its highest. Nevertheless, the basis of metaphorical use is the ordinary linguistic knowledge about words, their semantic properties, and their combining owners that all speakers possess. According to Ullmann (1970: 162) in Chokoe (2000) and Hasan (2005) a word can be given one or more figurative senses without losing its original meaning, that is; old and new will live side by side as long as there is no possibility of confusion between them. This allows many metaphors to be set out of the central sense.

People use figurative language in their daily discourse. The example in Sepedi below was taken from Chokoe (2000).

(25) *Re be re le maleng a naga*

We were in the intestines of the wilderness.

We were in the wilderness.

It is clear that *naga* does not have intestines. However, due to the mingled and twisted condition of intestines in the stomach, one feels that one would get lost if one would go

into the intestines (Chokoe, 2000). In this case, *mala* is shifted to mean the deep forest and may have other attributes such as *mala* referring to the engine of a car.

(d) Shifts in application

Semantic shift is the phenomenon whereby a word has the basic or principal meaning but that meaning has now undergone some modification, although it is still related to its basic meaning (Mokgokong, 1975) in (Chokoe, 2000). It is unusual that one would find a word with one meaning (Germain & le-Blanc, 1994:40) in (Hasan, 2005). Most words have different meanings, which sometimes can lead to ambiguity. According to Ullmann (1962:160) in Hasan, (2005), through the shifts in application, some of the various meanings remain constant, while others may develop into permanent shades of meaning and are regarded as various senses of the same word. This phenomenon exists in North Kurmanj. (Kurdish) as the following example illustrates:

(26) *Kefti*

The adjective *Kefti* in (26) denotes several meanings such as the following.

Poor

Old

Useless

Fell

A word may be unambiguous in isolation, but have its meaning shifted as soon as it is applied within a certain context, and its meaning becomes context-specific (Chokoe, 2000).

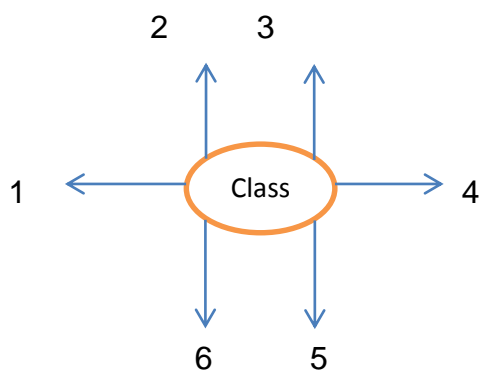
(e) Specialisation in a social milieu

This is another factor through which polysemy can arise. The term specialisation in a social milieu means that a sense of lexical items may reveal itself by a specialised context,

without any need for a qualifying epithet. Ullmann (1962: 162) in Hasan (2005) argues that the extreme form of specialisation is reached when a common noun virtually becomes a proper name denoting a single object in a particular environment, For instance, the word 'Karmend' means a 'person who deals with medical actions in hospital', In court, it refers to a 'person who deals with legal actions', whereas in the agricultural offices it 'denotes a person who deals with agricultural actions', in military affairs it means a 'person who deals with military matters' (Hasan, 2005). Ullmann (1970) in (Chokoe, 2000) goes on to say that in every situation or profession, there is a certain idea which is so much present to one's mind, so clearly implied, that it seems not necessary to state it when speaking.

The word 'class' for instance, can be used in different contexts. To capture the ambiguity of the word 'class' it is important to consider the radiant structure of the word class in the figure 2 below and then consider the sentence in (27):

Figure 2: Radiant structure of the word class.



(27a) These chairs inside the hall are reserved for people of the same class.

It is not clear what the word 'class' in sentence (27a) above refers to. The word may include socio-economic class, a body of students, a course of study, a collection of things

sharing similar attributes, a league ranked by quality (usually sports related), and elegance in dress or behaviour. Consider the sentence below.

(27b) Chairs inside the hall are reserved for people of the same class, which is grade 12 only.

It was not easy to determine which class is the speaker referring to, but now it is clearer that the speaker is only referring to a body of students who belong to the same group.

2.5 DISTINCTION BETWEEN POLYSEMY AND HOMONYM

Some linguists still find it difficult to distinguish between homonymy and polysemy. However, polysemy is distinguished from homonymy not only according to the criterion of relatedness in meaning, but also according to that of etymology. The problem arising is therefore, to decide when there is a polysemy and when there is a homonymy as pointed out by Palmer (1981:102). When several words have the same forms from the same origin, but unrelated meanings, should they be treated as homonyms or polysemous words? The answer is a bit tricky as Nguyen (2012) mentioned that in language learning, it is quite difficult to distinguish between case of homonymy and polysemy. Nguyen's point of view is seconded by Ndlovu & Sayi (2013) who maintain that "The distinction between polysemy and homonymy is not always clear-cut, therefore remaining a debating-point among linguists and lexicographers. As a result of this debate, a number of criteria have been put forward in an attempt to distinguish these two semantic concepts".

Dash (2002) made a very useful contribution to semantics by briefly explaining the difference between polysemy and homonym presented in table 1 below:

Table 1 Difference between polysemy and homonym

| Criteria | polysemy | Homonymy |
|-----------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| Existence | Word level | Word level |
| Structure | Single form | Similar form |
| Orthography | Do not vary in spelling | May vary in spelling |
| Utterance | Do not have variation | Pronounced variation |
| Sense Variation | Mostly due to context | Due to meaning and etymology |
| Context | Plays a vital role | Has no role to play |

Table 1 above summarises the difference between polysemy and homonym (Dash, 2010). Mohammed & Altaie (2011) maintain that the problem of how to draw the line between homonymy and polysemy can be solved by the recognition that the different senses of the word are related historically, that is, they can be traced back to the same source, for example 'pupil' (student) and 'pupil' (of the eye).

Mohammed & Areej (2010) emphasises that "We can explain polysemy happily enough as the existence of more than one semantic specification for the same lexical item; and we can also define homonymy as the existence of more than one morphological specification sharing the same phonological or graphic form".

The writers argue that when one word has three or less different meanings, it must be treated as homonymy. But in a case where there are more than three related meanings of one word, that particular word should be treated as polysemous.

2.6 STRUCTURAL AMBIGUITY

As stated in section 2.2, the second type of ambiguity is structural ambiguity. Structural ambiguity is also known as syntactic or grammatical ambiguity (Khawalda & Al- Saidat, 2012). They further say that structural ambiguity occurs when a phrase or a sentence has more than one underlying structure, such as phrases. Yule (1981:83) in Qori'ah, (2009) said that in an ambiguous structure, a grammar will have to be capable of showing the structural distinction between two underlying representation. Meanwhile, Fromkin & Dodman (1978:228) in Qori'ah (2009) argue that double meaning is not due to any ambiguous words, but rather to the fact that words can appear in two different phrase-structure trees since both are permitted in the phrase-structure rules. Chokoe (2000:135) agrees that:

a sentence which is ambiguous because its words relate to each other in different ways, even though none of the individual words are ambiguous, is structurally ambiguous.

The first two theories given above concur with each other in the sense that a statement or a sentence must, apart from its surface structure, have an underlying structure as well. A sentence will have a visible meaning that can be captured on the spot, whereas the other meaning will be seen at the later stage. The second theory confirms that a sentence can be ambiguous not only through an ambiguous word in a sentence but also factors that include sentence construction which entail the arrangement of words within a sentence.

Nguyen (2007) discusses an example of a structural ambiguity statement which does not have any ambiguous word in it but still have two different implications. Consider the following sentence:

(28) 'Visiting relatives can be boring'.

The sentence in (28) can be interpreted in two ways. It may mean that it can be boring to visit relatives or relatives who are visiting can be boring. There is no word which is ambiguous in (28) above. However, the structure of a sentence brings about ambiguity. Nguyen (2007) argues that the mastering of the sources of structural ambiguity together with the ways of disambiguating makes communication successful. Ways of disambiguating ambiguous sentences, as explained by Nguyen (2007), include the provision of additional contexts or any pieces of information to the ambiguous word or sentence. This context includes information contained within the text or discourse in which the word appears, together with extra-linguistic information about the text. To provide extra-linguistic context to the structurally ambiguous sentence given above, consider the following sentence:

(28a) 'Relatives that are visiting can be boring'. Or 'it is boring to visit relatives'.

The two sentences in (28a) are clearer as compared to the one in (28) above. Extra-linguistic context is provided to disambiguate the sentence. The views of the scholar relate to this study as they assume that writing about either lexical or structural ambiguity brings disambiguation of sentences. Norman (2011) discusses another example of structural ambiguity.

In a very intriguing dialogue between Livers and Leonard after Livers had forgotten about the trip to Giyani in 2010 with Leonard's wife, out of the blue, Leonard uttered the sentence below:

(29) 'I hear you had a good time with my wife'.

Livers looked startled and presumably did some high-speed thinking. Leonard looked friendly, and in a few seconds Livers relaxed as he realised that Leonard had used an unfamiliar way of sentence construction to mean in company with and not by being in bed with her as Livers thought. Another kind of structural ambiguity stems from some aspect of English grammar, often from the arrangement of words and structures or from the classification of words. It is the arrangement of words that causes the double meaning in this sentence (Norman, 2011).

Structural ambiguity exists when the two or more meanings of the phrase or sentence are the consequence of structure. Structural ambiguity is of two types namely, grouping and function ambiguity (Hudson, 2000: 314). Grouping ambiguity occurs “when the same string of words may have two meanings based upon different possible groupings of the words” (Hudson, 2000: 96).

The following tree diagram of the strings is illustrated with two different meanings:

(30) ‘Nutritious food and drink’.

Figure 3: Same strings of words

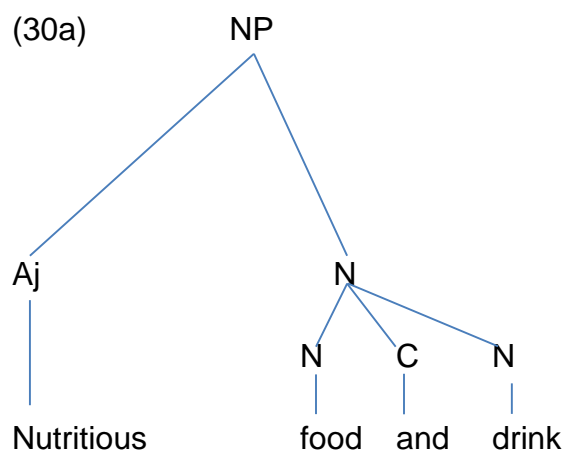
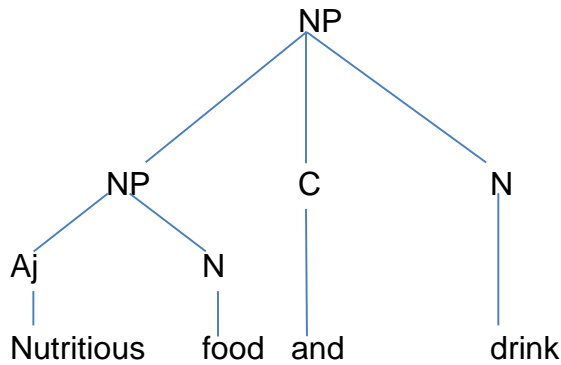


Figure 4: Same strings of words

(30b)

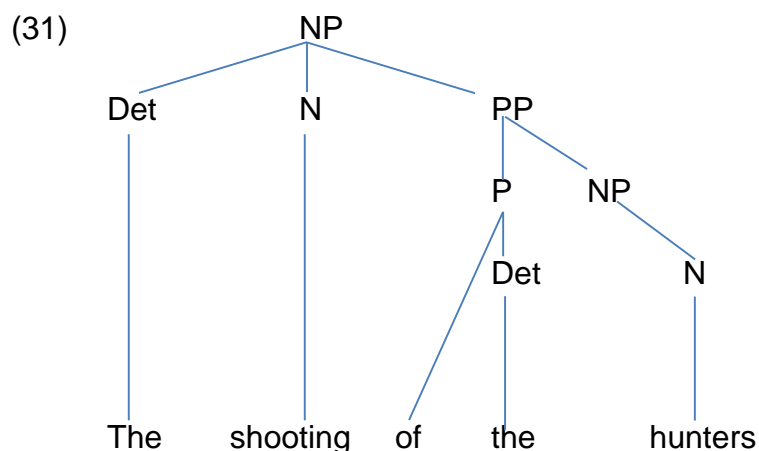


It is apparent that from the two tree diagrams above that the NP (nutritious food and drink) consists of two structures, one represented by (30a) and the other by (30b). In (30a) the nouns ‘food and drink’ are grouped or joined together by the conjunction to form the phrase ‘food and drink’ which is modified by the adjective nutritious which is separate from the embedded phrase. Attributively, we could say that ‘food and drink’ are nutritious. However, the NP in (30b) the adjective ‘nutritious’ modifies only the element with which it is grouped, that is, the noun ‘food’. Thus, it is suggested in this structure that only ‘food’ is nutritious. Ultimately we are told only about the qualities of ‘food’ and thus, in terms of this structure, nothing about the word ‘drink’.

Function ambiguity occurs “when a word or phrase potentially fulfills two or more grammatical relations, and morphemes and groupings are the same for both meanings” (Hudson, 2000 314).

The following is the tree diagram of the NP ‘the shooting of the hunters’

Figure 5: Tree diagram of the NP



The NP “the shooting of the hunters” makes two suggestions. The first is that hunters are shot by someone. In this case, the noun ‘hunters’ become the object of the verb shot. This may be re-written as ‘John shoots the hunters’. Secondly, it suggests that there are hunters who shoot; that is, hunters do the shooting of something. Thus, this could be re-written as ‘The hunters shot (a lion)’. From this perspective, the word ‘hunters’ is the subject of the verb shoot. Ambiguity of this kind, argues Hudson (2000) which is brought about by the same grouping on both interpretations, is a consequence of one word ‘shoot’ fulfilling two grammatical relations. The structure of the expressions makes ‘hunters’ simultaneously (a) the subject and (b) the object of the verb ‘shoot’. But for this to happen, the verb is transformed into the noun ‘shooting’. Although the respective noun/verb shooting /shoot have one meaning, the sentence has two meanings. Hudson (2000) maintains that “the two meanings are distinct only by function, or grammatical function, of some word”. In this case, that word would be ‘shooting’.

Similar to Hudson’s notion of grouping ambiguity is Fromkin et al.’s (2007: 119) postulation of structural ambiguity which is a result of different structures. It is held that the phrase ‘synthetic buffalo hides’, for instance, is ambiguous. This ambiguity can be illustrated by grouping together the words of the phrase in two ways.

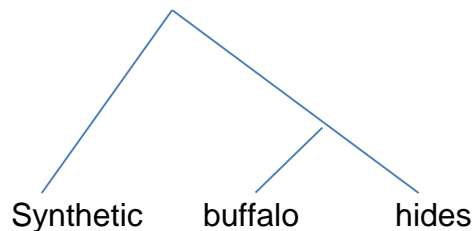
32a) 'Synthetic [buffalo hides]'.

(32b) '[Synthetic buffalo] hides'.

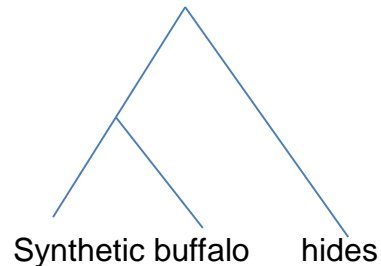
In (32a), the sentence means 'buffalo hides that are synthetic'. In other words, the expression is about the 'synthetic hides of a buffalo'. The phrase in (32b) can be interpreted as 'hides of synthetic buffalo'. That is, the structure suggests that a synthetic buffalo has hides. Fromkin et al. (2007) state that it is the rules of syntax that allows both groupings the phrases, resulting in the ambiguous expression. The two structures can further be illustrated hierarchically through the use of hierarchical diagrams.

Figure 6: Grouping ambiguity

(32a)



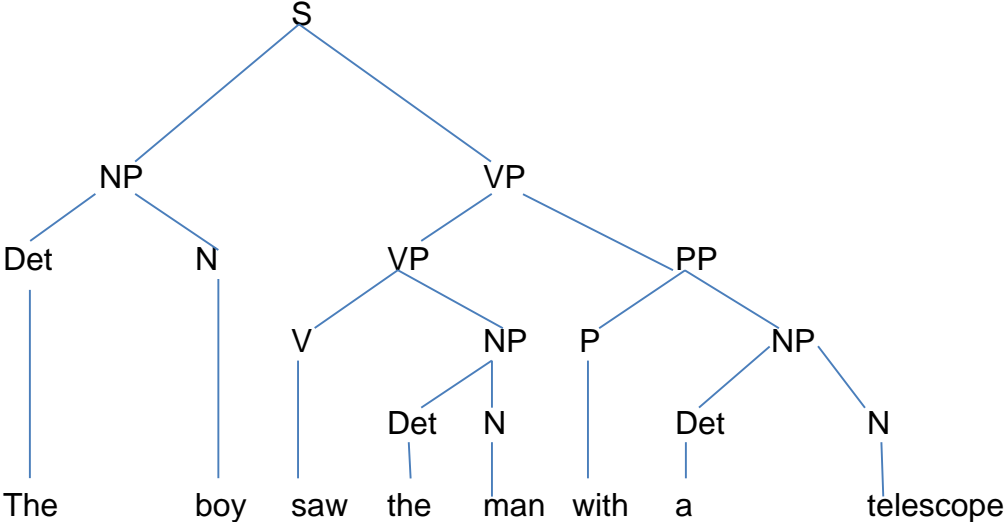
(32b)



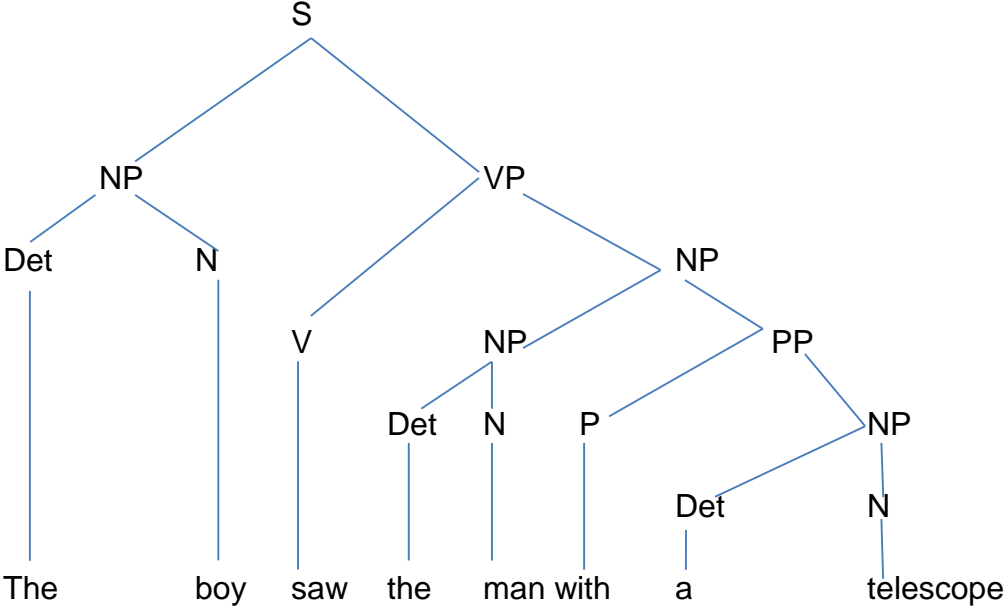
Structural ambiguity can also be observed in the expression “the boy saw the man with a telescope”, which can be represented by the following tree diagrams of the two phrase structures of the sentence. Each of the two phrase structures corresponds to a different meaning of the sentence.

Figure 7: The two phrase structures of the sentence

(33a)



(33b)

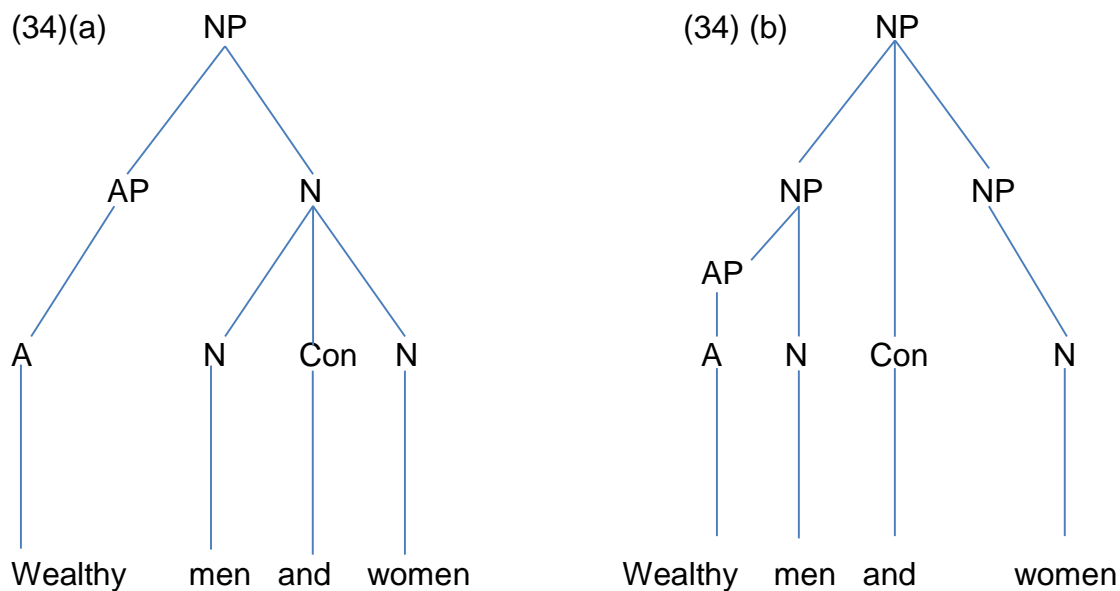


According to Fromkin et al. (2007: 178), the PP ‘with a telescope’ in (33a) modifies the VP ‘saw the man’, results in the interpretation that construes the action of seeing as

occurring by the use of a telescope. On the other hand, the PP in (33b) qualifies the NP 'the man', suggesting that the man has a telescope.

Furthermore, O'Grady (1996:284) note that when the meanings of the component words of sentences can be combined in more than one way, a case can be made of structural ambiguity. For instance, in the phrase 'wealthy men and women' can be seen as the property of both men and women or of just men. This could be simplified through the help of tree diagrams.

Figure 8: Wealthy men and women



In 34(a) the adjective 'wealthy' modifies both nouns 'men and women'. Such modification is effected by the category N immediately below the category NP. Through the use of the conjunction, the category combines the nouns 'men and women' as one entity.

Consequently, the adjective 'wealthy' suggests that both men and women have the property 'wealth'. In 34(b) on the other hand, the adjective 'wealthy' combines only with the noun 'men' (O'Grady et al., 1996: 284-285). In this respect, the adjective applies only to 'men'. That is, only 'men' are wealthy, and nothing is said about 'women'.

2.7 SUMMARY

In concluding this chapter, through the use of different scholars and authors, the researcher showed that ambiguity exists. It is somewhat a topic to be studied and a problem to be solved. Language is a tool used for different purposes that is for educational, social, political, economic, and cultural purposes. Communication loses meaning at some stages where people happen to misunderstand each other because of ambiguity. The researcher gave vast instances of ambiguity at lexical and structural level and how it affects daily discourses and interactions amongst social beings. In this regard, the researcher deliberated on homonyms and polysemy as the causes of lexical ambiguity in different languages. In the following chapter, the writer focuses on research methodology.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

A comprehensive research should indicate how data was generated. In this chapter, the researcher explains the research methodology employed in the investigation of ambiguity in Xitsonga. The chapter consists of the research method, research design, sampling, data collection and data analysis, ethical considerations of the research and a summary of the chapter.

3.2 RESEARCH METHOD

A research method is a strategy of inquiry that moves from the underlying philosophical assumptions to research design and data collection (Myers, 2009). Thus, the choice of research method influences the way in which a researcher collects data. There are three methods of conducting a research which are qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods of inquiry. Mixed methods research combines both qualitative and quantitative methods. This research is based on the qualitative method of inquiry which, according to Smith (1987:174), is empirical.

Qualitative research methods make use of documents and texts, among others, as sources of data (Myers, 2009). Thus, the analysis of ambiguity in this study is based, as its point of departure, on the analysis of the semantic fields of homonyms and polysemy as sources of lexical ambiguity. In other words, the analysis, discussion and interpretation of sentences containing lexical ambiguity will be based on the understanding of these concepts as sources of lexical ambiguity. Similarly, structural ambiguity is analysed through sentences because it is at this level that this semantic field is manifested.

Patton and Cochran (2002) are of the view that qualitative research is characterised by its aims, which relate to understanding some aspect of social life, and its methods which (in general) generate words, rather than numbers, as data for analysis.

Qualitative research is concerned with qualitative phenomenon involving quality (Rajasekar, Philominathan, & Chinnathambi, 2013). Some of the characteristics of qualitative research/method are as follows:

- It is non-numerical, descriptive, applies reasoning and uses words;
- Its aim is to get the meaning, feeling and describe the situation;
- Qualitative data cannot be graphed;
- It is exploratory; and
- It investigates the 'why' and 'how' of decision making.

The analysis in this study focuses on the interpretation of ambiguity in Xitsonga rather than on the number of people using ambiguity or the number of lexical items or sentences constituting ambiguity. The researcher chose qualitative method of inquiry because the aim was to describe and interpret ambiguity in Xitsonga.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

Kothari (2004) states that research design is the conceptual structure within which the research is conducted; it constitutes the blueprint for the collection, measurement and analysis of data. As such, the design includes an outline of what the researcher will do from writing the hypothesis and its operational implications to the final analysis of data. The research design can simply be described as a map of how to go about developing the research.

According to Van Wyk (2012), there are many types of research designs, namely exploration, description, explanation, prediction, evaluation and history. There are three more research designs which are quasi-experimental, ethnographic and case studies

(Mid-Continent Comprehensive Center, 2003). The present research is descriptive. Descriptive studies attempt to describe systematically a situation, problem, phenomenon, service or programme, and may describe living conditions of a community, or attitudes towards an issue (Kumar, 2012). This study focuses on the description of the phenomenon of ambiguity at both lexical and structural sentences in Xitsonga.

According to Van Wyk (2012), the main aim of descriptive research design is to provide an accurate and valid representation of relevant research questions. Such research is more structured than exploratory research. Similarly, Nunan (1992) asserts that descriptive research aims at increasing our understanding rather than changing the phenomenon under investigation.

Kothari (2004) stresses the fact that descriptive studies provide detailed explanation of the phenomenon under investigation as follows:

Includes surveys and fact-finding enquiries of different kinds. The major purpose of descriptive research is description of the state of affairs as it exists at present. The main characteristic of this method is that the researcher has no control over the variables or research questions. The researcher can only report what has happened or what is happening.

3.4 SAMPLING

Sampling is the act, process, or technique of selecting a suitable sample, or a representative part of a population for the purpose of determining parameters or characteristics of the whole population (Mugo, 2002). According to Matima (2010), there are two methods of sampling: probability and non-probability sampling. Types of non-probability sampling methods include convenience sampling, judgemental or purposive sampling, quota sampling and snowball sampling (Mugo, 2002). In terms of this view, non-probability relies on the researcher's personal judgements. The researcher identifies who will be the respondents in the research. In probability sampling, every element or population has an equal chance of being selected. Methods that are used in probability

sampling are simple random, systematic sampling, stratified sampling and cluster sampling (Matima, 2010).

This research employs non-probability sampling. The researcher observed all possible ambiguous structures from Xitsonga speakers. Specifically, the researcher observed both lexical and structural ambiguous utterances from the speakers of Xitsonga. In addition, the researcher used his knowledge of Xitsonga as a native speaker of the language to collect and analyse the ambiguity. The choice of sampling was informed by the idea to include all types of homonyms and polysemy in the study.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION

The research focused on the investigation of lexical and structural ambiguity in Xitsonga. In so doing, it was useful to collect, as units of analysis, Xitsonga linguistic data, either through homonyms or polysemes, representing ambiguity at word, phrasal and sentence levels. Data was collected from, among others, different secondary sources, including textbooks, dissertations, articles from journals and the internet. The researcher made use of self-observation of the two types of ambiguity in his own daily interpersonal interactions with other native Xitsonga speakers. After collecting all linguistic data representing ambiguity, the researcher listed homonyms and polysemes as sources of ambiguity, for further systematic description and interpretation.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is a systematic search for meaning. It is a way to process qualitative data so that what has been learned can be communicated to others. Analysis means organising and interrogating data in ways that allow researchers to see patterns, identify themes, discover relationships, develop explanations, make interpretations, mount

critiques, or generate theories (Hatch, 2002). In this regard, the researcher read and identified homonymous and polysemous words, phrases and sentences containing ambiguity in Xitsonga. In so doing, the researcher classified them in terms of whether they represented either lexical or structural ambiguity through tree diagrams and bracketing.

For detailed analysis both the deductive and the inductive approaches were used. Deductive reasoning works from more general to more specific outcomes (Burney, 2008). Sometimes, this is informally called a “top-down” approach. By contrast, the inductive framework operates from specific information to general conclusions. The focus is primarily on ambiguity rather than on homonyms and polysemes. Data analysis is followed by a conclusion with possible solutions to the problem.

3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The concept “ethics” involves protection to the research participants. The research process creates tension between the aims of research to make generalisations for the good of others, and the rights of participants to maintain privacy. Ethics pertains to doing good and avoiding harm (Orb, Eisenhauer & Wynaden. 2001). Since the study focuses primarily on the linguistic phenomenon of ambiguity rather than on human participants, the researcher is not going to collect data from anyone. Thus, there will be no harm to any social beings.

3.8 SUMMARY

This chapter outlined aspects pertaining to the research methodology to be applied in the study. The qualitative method of inquiry was selected as a suitable method for this study. It has also been seen that the research was undertaken through the descriptive research

design. The methods of collecting data were also outlined, which include several documents as well as self-observation of relevant linguistic data as a Xitsonga speaking scholar. For sampling and data analysis, it was observed that knowledge of homonyms and polysemes as sources of lexical ambiguity in Xitsonga was helpful.

CHAPTER 4

AN ANALYSIS OF LEXICAL AND STRUCTURAL AMBIGUITY IN XITSONGA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In many instances, people do not think of a proper way of constructing sentences, hence they just talk without knowing that their expressions can be ambiguous and in certain circumstances, misleading. It is said that ambiguity is often a problem that must be solved in order for people to understand each other (Quiroga, 2003). In this chapter, words, phrases and sentences with possible confusing meanings in Xitsonga are discussed. These words are classified into two categories: homonyms (homographs and homophones) and polysemes. As for structural ambiguity, it is said that the meaning of expressions cannot always be obvious, not even to a native language speaker. In addition, sentences possessing many different meanings are discussed. Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams (2007) maintain that structural ambiguities are a result of different sentence structures. Phrase structure trees as well as grouping of constituents are used as tools to explore different meanings associated with different sentences.

The following sub-section focuses on homonyms and polysemous words which may bring about ambiguity in Xitsonga.

4.2 LEXICAL AMBIGUITY

4.2.1 LEXICAL AMBIGUITY CAUSED BY HOMONYMS

There are two types of homonyms namely, homographs and homophones. However, it appears that there are no homophones in Xitsonga because it does not have silent letters. Silent letters are letters that appear in the spelling of words, but do not make a sound, for

example the 'h' in the word 'hour' (Peters, 2012). However, Xitsonga has plenty of homographic words. In this sub-section, nominal (noun), verbal and adjectival homographic words are listed. This is followed by a discussion on how some of these homographs bring about ambiguity.

(a) NOMINAL HOMOGRAPHS IN XITSONGA

The following are nominal homographs:

(35) *Mavele*
Breasts
Corn

(36) *Papa*
Father
Cloud

(37) *Dzovo*
Skin
Coat

(38) *Murhi*
Tree
Medicine

(39) *Tatana*
Father
Fruit

- (40) *Riwa*
Cave or a port hole
Pumpkin
- (41) *Rhanga*
Disease
Pumpkin
- (42) *Ndzhenga*
Afternoon
White thorn
- (43) *Barha*
Wheelbarrow
Bar (lounge)
- (44) *Nala*
Rival or enemy
Mourning cloth
- (45) *Bombo*
Fashion (clothes)
Bomb
- (46) *Gerhe*
Gear (of a car)
Kit
- (47) *Ndzhati*
September
Bar or line

(48) *Matimba*
Strength
Sweet cane

(49) *Kaya*
Home
Massacre

(50) Rivengo
Hatred
Spleen

(51) *Makoti*
Bride
Birds

It is evident that there are noun homographs in Xitsonga. The listed words above have the potential of bringing about ambiguity. Below is a detailed account of ambiguity caused by nominal homographs in Xitsonga.

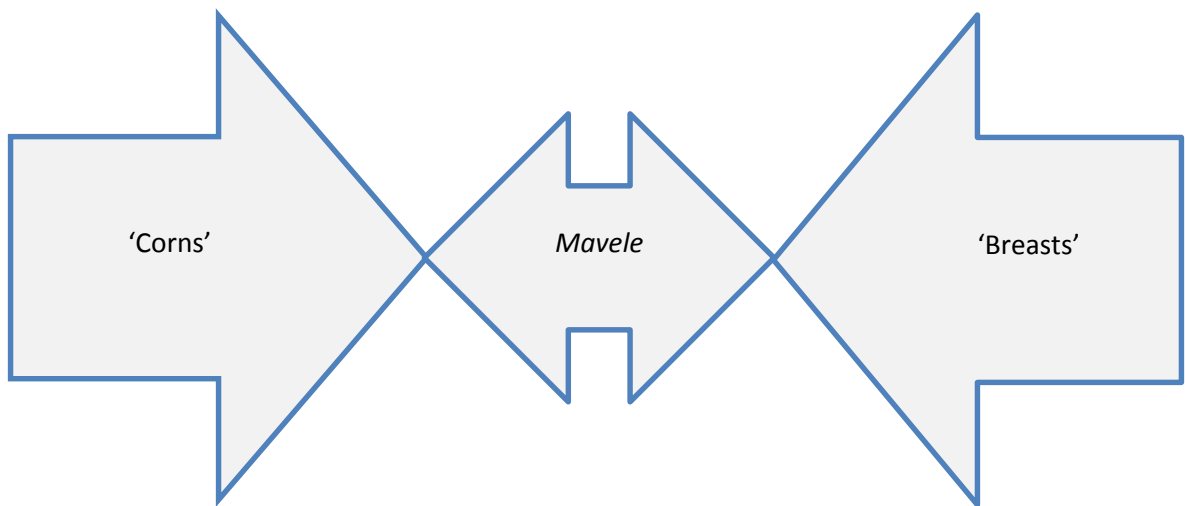
(b) AMBIGUITY CAUSED BY NOMINAL HOMOGRAPHS

In this sub-section, ambiguity caused by nominal homographs is discussed. The following is an example of ambiguity which is caused by nominal homographs:

(52) *Ndaheni u ni mavele ya kulu.*
Ndaheni has big breasts.
Ndaheni has grown big corns.

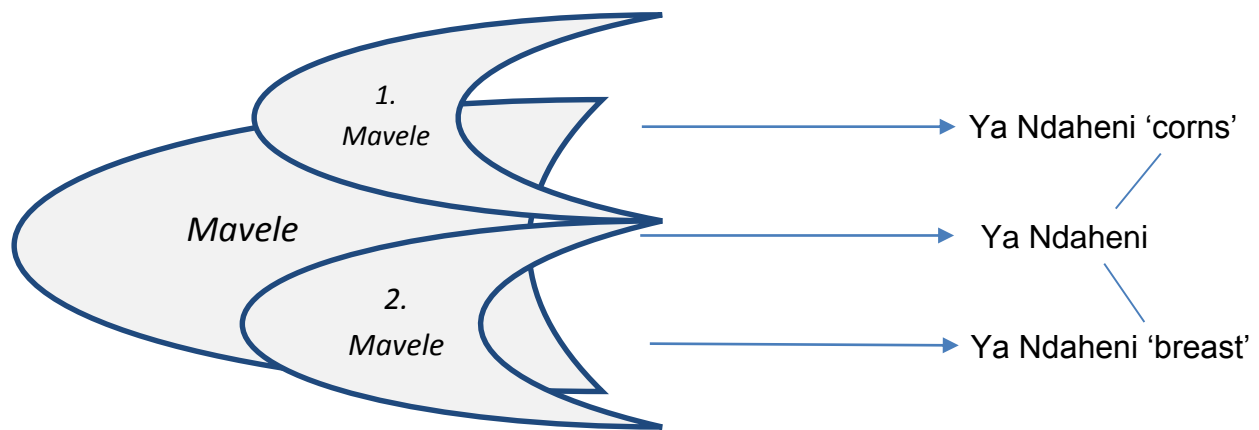
The homographic word *mavele* (breasts; corns) can refer to both ‘breasts’ and ‘corns’. The words ‘corns’ and ‘breasts’ belong to the same category or part of speech, that is, they are both nouns. The semantic relations of the word *mavele* is illustrated in figure 9 below:

Figure 9: The semantic relations of the word *mavele*.



The figure above shows that there is no relation between ‘corns’ and ‘breasts’. Consider the figure below:

Figure 10: There is no relation between ‘corns’ and ‘breasts’.



The illustration above indicates that without proper context, it would be difficult to decide whether *mavele* refers to ‘corns’ or ‘breasts’. Therefore, the word *mavele* creates lexical ambiguity in sentence. However, there are ways to disambiguate it. Below is the disambiguated version of sentence (52) above

(52a) *Ndaheni u ni mavele yakulu onge i ntswedanyi.*

Ndaheni has big breasts like a breast-feeding woman.

The statement above is clear. *Mavele* in the sentence contains the semantic properties of woman. (Fromkin et al. 2002). Semantic properties are linguistic meanings of words. The phrase *ongge i ntswedanyi* helps the listener or the reader to understand that in this context *mavele* refers to breasts. The sentence above is therefore disambiguated. Another different sentence with *mavele* below bears reference.

(52b) *Ndaheni u ni mavele ya kulu ensinwini yakwe.*

Ndaheni has grown big corns in her garden.

Mavele in this regard only refers to corns. We see it through the noun phrase *ensinwini yakwe*. The sentence channels listeners to what exactly the speaker is talking about.

Giving full contextualised sentences helps the reader or speaker to understand a sentence with ease. Disambiguation therefore has taken place.

(53) *Musi lowu wa chavisa.*

This smoke is scary.

This pestle is scary.

The homograph *musi* has two interpretations of a 'smoke' which is caused by fire and of a 'pestle' made of a tree. Such sentences lead to communication breakdown and misunderstanding. Thus, the word *musi* brings about lexical ambiguity. It is apparent that languages differ in orthography. In English, there is 'smoke' which is totally different from 'pestle'. There seem not to be any historical relatedness between a 'pestle' and 'smoke'. The sentence would be easier to comprehend if it could be disambiguated. Below is a statement with an additional phrase.

(53a) *Musi lowu wa chavisa naswona wa tika.*

This pestle is ugly and heavy.

The additional phrase *naswona wa tika* (53a) disambiguates the sentence. A reader or listener would not have any problem in comprehending the statement above. The phrase *naswona wa tika* specifically tells the reader that the object referred to is a 'pestle'. Another sentence with the word *musi* which needs to be disambiguated is presented below.

(53b) *Musi lowu wa chavisa onge ko tshwa yindlu.*

This smoke is scary as if a house is burning.

Sentence (53b) stipulates that *musi* is a 'smoke'. The added phrase *onqe ko tshwa yindlu* makes the sentence even clearer. The sentence is therefore disambiguated.

(c) VERBAL HOMOGRAPHS IN XITSONGA

Verbal homographs are listed in this sub-section.

(54) *Boxa*
Pierce
Disclose

(55) *Venga*
Hate
Slice (meat)

(56) *Hala*
Scratch
There

(57) *Tlula*
Jump
Do better than

(58) *Phama*
Dish out (food)
Plaster (a house)

(59) *Hlayisa*
Take care of (children; the elderly)
Make a person read (a book)

- (60) *Hola*
 Heal
 Earn (get paid)
- (61) *Gwaza*
 A step ahead (going forward)
 Stab
- (62) *Gada*
 Rape
 Get inside (a car) or step on (a step ladder)
 Watch (a property for security reasons)
- (63) *Tengisa*
 Purify
 Try (in a court of law)

The list confirms the existence of verbal homographs in Xitsonga. These verbal homographs can, as shown below, cause lexical ambiguity.

(d) LEXICAL AMBIGUITY CAUSED BY VERBAL HOMOGRAPHS

In this sub-section, verbal homographs that bring about ambiguity are discussed.

- (64) *Ndzi ta hola ku nga ri khale.*
 I will heal soon.
 I will get paid or earn soon.

The above sentence is lexically ambiguous because of the word *hola*. The word *hola* has two interpretations: 'heal' and 'get paid/earn'.

It would be helpful if the speaker could provide enough supporting context to make readers and listeners understand which of the two meanings he or she is referring to. Below is a sentence with *hola* but is fully contextualised.

(64a) *Ndzi ta hola ku nga ri khale dokodela u ndzi nyikile murhi.*

I will heal soon, the doctor gave me medicine.

It is clear that the sentence *ndzi ta hola* is ambiguous. The added phrase *dokodela u ndzi nyikile murhi* makes the sentence comprehensible. A reader would not struggle in understanding the intended meaning. The words *dokodela* and *murhi* bring to the attention of the reader or listener that *hola* in the context above involves healing. The listener or reader depends on his/her mental lexicon in the interpretation of the meanings of the word. The term 'mental lexicon' refers to the arrangement of words in one's mind (Sripada, 2008). It is evident that the phrase *dokodela u ndzi nyikile murhi* disambiguates the ambiguous sentence.

Another phrase can be added to *ndzi ta hola ku nga ri khale*, making the sentence to bring a different meaning. Consider the sentence below.

(64b) *Ndzi ta hola ku nga ri khale, u ta yi kuma mali ya wena.*

I will soon get paid, you will get your money.

The phrase *u ta yi kuma mali ya wena* in the above sentence modifies the sentence *Ndzi ta hola ku nga ri khale* so that it becomes understandable. The speaker refers to 'earning' not 'healing'. We know this because of the meaning of the word *mali* in the added phrase. The sentence in (64) is no longer ambiguous. The morpheme *-ile* can be included to change the root morpheme *hola* into the past tense. Morphemes are minimal linguistic units. These are the sounds and meanings that cannot be further analysed (Fromkin et al, 2007). The word *horile* can create ambiguity.

(64c) *N'wa Hundla-Hundla u horile.*

N'wa Hundla-Hundla got paid/has earned.

N'wa Hundla-Hundla is healed.

The sentence above in (64c) is lexically ambiguous because of the verbal homograph *horile*. The sentence could be disambiguated, *N'wa Hundla-Hundla u horile mukhuhlwani* (N'wa Hundla-Hundla healed from flu). Or *N'wa Hundla-Hundla u horile ncinci nhweti leyi* (N'wa Hundla-Hundla earned little money this month). As alluded before, it is of great importance that speakers provide enough supporting context to avoid ambiguity.

(65) *Ndzi ta ku venga.*

I will hate you.

I will slice you.

The word *venga* has two meanings, that is, 'hate' and 'slice'. 'Hate' and 'slice' belong to the same parts of speech, that is, they are verbs. The sentence above is lexically ambiguous. The word *venga* means that you actually hate something. Alternatively, it may also mean that you cut something into pieces. However, the sentence could be disambiguated. Consider the sentence below.

(65a) *Ndzi ta ku venga vutomi bya mina hinkwabyo.*

I will hate you for the rest of my life.

The noun phrase *vutomi bya mina hinkwabyo* (65a) in the above sentence disambiguates it. The NP *vutomi bya mina hinkwabyo* modifies the above sentence to mean 'to hate' and not to 'slice'. Another phrase could still be added to give a different meaning of the sentence *Ndzi ta ku venga*. Below is a sentence with a phrase that brings a different meaning of the word *venga*.

(65b) *Ndzi ta ku venga ku fana na ntonga*

I will slice you like a biltong.

It is clear that giving full context to sentences helps to disambiguate confusing utterances. The sentence above in (65b) is clearer than before. The phrase *ku fana na ntonga* gives the reader or listener a picture of what the speaker is talking about. It also gives the meaning of the word *venga* as ‘to slice’ and not ‘to hate’.

(e) ADJECTIVAL/VERBAL HOMOGRAPHS IN XITSONGA

In this section, adjectival/verbal homographs that may lead to ambiguity are listed.

(66) *Khanya*

Adjective: to be beautiful

Verb: to cause psychological pain

(f) LEXICAL AMBIGUITY CAUSED BY ADJECTIVAL / VERBAL HOMOGRAPHS

In the discussion that follows, lexical ambiguity caused by adjectival / verbal homographs is explained.

(66a) *Ndzi dyela ku khanya.*

I eat to be beautiful.

I eat to cause psychological pain to someone.

The word *khanya* has two meanings “beautiful” and to “cause psychological pain”. The homograph *khanya* makes the sentence above to be lexically ambiguous because of its double meanings. The sentence can be disambiguated. This is demonstrated in the sentence below.

(66b) *Ndzi dyela ku khanya Selina eka leswi a nga swi endla entlangwini waka hina*

I eat to cause psychological pain to Selina for what she did at my birthday party.

The sentence in (66b) above clearly states that someone is wasting food. The person is not really hungry. The intention is to make Selina suffer psychological pain. Therefore, the word *khanya* means making someone feel the pain. Below is another example of the other meaning of *khanya*.

(66c) *Ndzi dyela ku khanya kumbe ndzi nga va n'wambhuri wa Afrika-Dzonga.*

I eat so that I become beautiful maybe I can be Miss South Africa.

In the sentence above, the person eats in order to be beautiful. He or she wants to have a beautiful body to be able to participate in a beauty contest. The reader would know that the word *khanya* in this context refers to becoming beautiful and not to cause someone psychological pain.

The word *khanya* (beautiful; cause psychological pain to someone) can also be inflected into the past tense namely, *khanyile*. The verb *khanyile* can have two referential meanings namely, 'hit someone' and to 'cause psychological pain to someone'. It is important to illustrate this.

(66d) *Chavani u tikhanyile.*

Chavani hit himself (with a physical object).

Chavani caused himself psychological pain.

In the (66d), the verb *ti-khanyile* is preceded by the reflexive prefix *ti-*, making it a reflexive verb (Cook and Newson, 1988). Reflexive verbs are products of transformation. The following sentence illustrates this:

(66e) *Chavani u khanyile Chavani.*

Chavani hit Chavani.

Chavani caused psychological pain to Chavani.

The verb *khanyile* has two unrelated meanings: to hit and to cause pain. The two meanings are not related because one refers to a physical action. The other meaning is a psychological action. In order to disambiguate this sentence, a proper context is in order. The following sentence is illustrative:

(66f) *Chavani u tikhanyile rintiho hi ribye.*

Chavani hit himself on the finger with a stone.

In the context above, the verb *khanyile* has to do with the physical action of hitting oneself with an object such as a stone. Thus, the words *rintiho* (finger) and *ribye* (stone) give us the necessary details about the meaning of the verb *khanyile*. *Rintiho* tells us more about the location of the action. *Ribye* gives us details about the instrument used to hit with. In short, *rintiho* and *ribye* contextualise the meaning of *khanyile*. Without the two words, it is not possible to know which of the two meanings (to hit or to cause pain) *khanyile* refers to. But in the example below, the verb can also refer to the psychological action of self-injury.

(66g) *Chavani u tikhanyile [hi ku dya mudende wa yena hinkwawo], [u pfumala na mali yo xava swakudya].*

Chavani brought himself misery by spending his entire pension; he even has no money to buy food.

The above sentence tells a different narrative about the meaning of the homograph *khanyile*. It points out that the verb can also relate to bringing oneself misery in a psychological sense. The clause *ku dya mudende wa yena hinkwawo* (to spend all pension) gives the context to the understanding of the verb *khanyile* in the sentence. This is further accentuated by the second clause *u pfumala mali yo xava swakudya* (he has no money to buy food). Clearly, the two clauses pinpoint the meaning of *khanyile* as a psychological pain that the subject suffers from. From this perspective, the meaning of *khanyile* is brought to the fore as clearer than before and as unambiguously as possible.

Now that we have examined verbal ambiguity, it is helpful to pay attention to homographs belonging to different parts of speech. Below is a list of homographs belonging to different parts of speech.

(g) HOMOGRAPHS BELONGING TO DIFFERENT PARTS OF SPEECH IN XITSONGA

In this section, homographs that belong to different parts of speech are listed. These homographs cannot bring about ambiguity because they belong to different parts of speech. In each pair, one is a noun and the other is a verb, a preposition, etc.

(67) *Sindza*

Noun: Bracelet

Verb: Smear floor with dung

(68) *Tiva*

Verb: know

Noun: Lake

(69) *Wa*

Verb: Fall or drop

Preposition: Of

(70) *Xisa*

Noun: Brand

Verb: Deceive

(71) *Ya*

Verb: Go to

Preposition: Of

(72) *Na*
Noun: Rainfall
Conjunction: And

(73) *Jaha*
Noun: Lad
Verb: In a hurry

(74) *Gova*
Verb: Bend
Noun: Valley

(75) *Dzana*
Verb: Fall
Noun: Hundred

(76) *Vava*
Adverb: Painful
Noun: Dad (father)

4.2.2 POLYSEMY IN XITSONGA

Polysemy can be one of the causes of ambiguity. Polysemous words have two or more related meanings. In this section, polysemous senses that bring about lexical ambiguity are listed.

(77) *Chayela*
Whip
Drive

- (78) *Bukuta*
Bargain
Beat
- (79) *Hambiswiritano*
Anyway
Nevertheless
- (80) *Hanyanya*
Be active
Awake
- (81) *Gangisa*
Propose (love)
Canvas (politics)
- (82) *Gonya*
(A slope) climb, ascend
Of prices of goods/services – go up
- (83) *Hlangula*
Wipe (tears)
Remove faeces
- (84) *Hlanta*
Give birth
Vomit
- (85) *Hluvula*
Undress
Cleanse

- (86) *Kama*
Squeeze
Comb hair
Wring (clothes)
- (87) *Khabinete*
Cabinet (of government)
Cupboard (furniture)
- (88) *Avanyisa*
Divide
Adjudicate (judge)
- (89) *Khumbi*
Captive (slave)
Wall
- (90) *Lahla*
Bury
Throw away
- (91) *Mavoko*
Arms
Manpower
- (92) *Mbhisa*
Prostitute
Unfaithful
- (93) *Muhlovo*

Colour

Race

(94) *Ngwenya*

Crocodile

Veteran

(95) *Gava*

Catch

Cut into pieces

(96) *Pfuxeta*

Revise

Renovate

(97) *Ringa*

Tempt

Taste (of food, salt or sugar)

(98) *Teka*

Take

Marry

(99) *Tlhelo*

Side

Other hand

(100) *Tsarisa*

Enlist

Invigilate

Make someone write

(101) *Erivaleni*

Transparent

On the ground

Clear

(102) *Lova*

Die

Lose

(102) *Xirhapa*

Farm

Cemetery

(104) *Haxa*

Sow (mbewu)

Broadcast (mahungu)

(105) *Vumba*

Build

Clay (soil)

(106) *Mafurha*

Cooking oil

Body lotion

Gasoline

(107) *Damu*

Dam

Of a child (container of milk)

(108) *Rhula*
Pacific
Abate
Put down object carried on the head

(109) *Hola*
Cool or calm
Heal

(110) *Pfukela*
Erect (Of a penis)
Wake up early

(111) *Pfuxa*
Reconstruct
Awaken

4.2.3 Lexical ambiguity caused by polysemes

Two polysemous words in Xitsonga are discussed below. The discussion shows how ambiguity is manifested with respect to polysemy.

(112) *Ndzi tata loko ndzi heta ku kandza.*

I will come after grinding.

I will come after massaging.

The word *kandza* is polysemous. It has two semantically related meanings. Langacker (1991) states that polysemous lexemes always share the same etymological background and/or are conceived of as being semantically related by speakers. In the case above, both of these meanings have to do with making something smooth by either 'grinding' or 'massaging' it. When one grinds corn s/he makes it smooth. At the same time, when one

massages a body, with for example, hot water, the aim is to make it smooth, soft and flexible.

The polysemous word *kandza* relates to grinding of corn and the action of making a body of a person smooth. Figure 11 below illustrates this.

Figure 11: The relationship between *kandza* (grinding) and *kandza* (massaging)

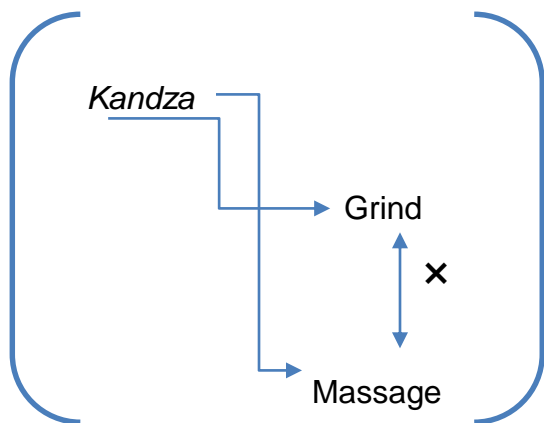


Figure 11 above shows the relationship between the two meanings of *kandza* (to grind) and *kandza* (to massage). Nonetheless, x in the figure above attests to the fact that grinding and massaging are related but not synonymously. Therefore, they cannot be used interchangeably. The sentence in (112) is therefore lexically ambiguous. However, it can be disambiguated as presented below:

(112a) *Ndzi tata loko ndzi heta ku kandza mavele na timanga.*

I will come after grinding corns and peanuts.

(112b) *Ndzi tata loko ndzi heta ku kandza nuna wa mina milenge.*

I will come after massaging my husband's feet.

The sentences in (112a) and (112b) are now free from ambiguity. The phrase *Mavele na timanga* (112a) tells the reader that the speaker refers to ‘grinding’. Relatively, the NP *nuna wa mina milenge* informs the reader that *kandza* in (112b) has to do with ‘massaging’. Another example for further discussion is the polysemous word *Swirhapa*. The word can bring about ambiguity if used in a sentence. Consider the sentence below:

(113) *Makovani u ya eswirhapeni.*

Makovani is going to the garden.

Makovani is going to the cemetery.

The polysemous *swirhapa* denotes two semantically related meanings. The first meaning is ‘a garden for growing vegetables’. The second meaning is a ‘cemetery’. Like in a garden, we can also say that people are planted in the cemetery. The process of planting involves digging the ground. In the context above, the noun *swirhapa* is in the plural form. Its singular form is *xirhapa*. The prefix *swi-*, makes the word to be in plurality. However, the sentence can be disambiguated. This is demonstrated in the sentence below:

(113a) *Makovani u ya e swirhapeni ku ya kha matsavu.*

Makovani is going to the field to pick vegetables.

The sentence is clear enough for a reader to understand its meaning. The sentence is modified by the verb phrase *ku kha matsavu* (to pick vegetables). The above sentence does not, however, limit other expressions related to *eswirhapeni*. This is shown in the following sentence:

(113b) *Makovani u ya e swirhapeni ku ya khulela sirha ra kokwana wakwe.*

Makovani is going to the cemetery to clean his granny’s grave.

The reader can easily understand the meaning of the above sentence in (113b). The interlocutor talks of a ‘cemetery’, not a garden. We note this from the added verb phrase

ku ya khulela sirha ra kokwana wakwe (to clean his granny's grave). In this way, the sentence has been disambiguated.

4.3 AN ANALYSIS OF STRUCTURAL AMBIGUITY

Structural ambiguity occurs when a phrase or a sentence has more than one underlying structure (Khawalda & Al- Saidat, 2012). Like in other human languages, it is possible to identify structural ambiguity in Xitsonga. Below is a list of sentences with double or more meanings. After listing these sentences, two of them are discussed in detail to show ambiguity.

4.3.1 LIST OF STRUCTURALLY AMBIGUOUS SENTENCES IN XITSONGA

This section discusses structurally ambiguous sentences in Xitsonga.

(114) Maphorisa va hlongorisa wanuna na mbyana.

Police are chasing a man who has a dog.

Police are chasing both the man and the dog.

(115) Nomvula u ambarisa n'wana swiambalo a ri eku dyeni.

Nomvula is dressing a child who is eating.

Nomvula is eating while dressing a child.

(116) Vavanuna na vavasati vo nyuhela va tsutsuma.

Fat men and fat women are running.

Men and fat women are running.

(117) Ndzi vone munhu na mbyana.

I saw a man who has a dog.

I saw a man and a dog.

(118) Gezani u dyile mbuti.

Gezani ate goat meat.

Gezani had sex with a goat.

(119) Vavanuna na vavasati va khale va rhandza vunanga bya xinto.

Old men and old women love traditional music.

Men and old women love traditional music.

(120) Vatswari va Nhlamulo na Hlulani va holovile.

Nhlamulo and Hlulani's parents fought.

Nhlamulo's parents and Hlulani's parents fought.

Nhlamulo's parents fought with Hlulani.

(121) N'wingi u biwile hi mhani wa Leonard kumbe lucky.

Leonard's mother beats her daughter in-law.

Lucky's mother beats her daughter in-law.

(122) Sizeka kumbe Masapu na Mafanato va yile e Giyani.

Sizeka went to Giyani with Mafanato.

Masapu and Mafanato went to Giyani.

(123) Loyi wanuna, wansati wa nwi ba.

This man beats the woman.

This man is beaten by the woman.

(124) Kokwana va le ku endleni ka masangu.

Granny is making traditional mats.

Granny is having sex.

(125) Tolo ndzi etlele na papa.

Yesterday I shared a bed with my father.

Yesterday I had sex with my father.

(126) Ndzi tiva vanhwanyana vo saseka ku tlula Nkosinhathi.

I know more beautiful girls than Nkosinhathi.

I know beautiful girls more than Nkosinhathi knows.

(127) A ku dzahiwi.

Let it be smoked /Let us smoke.

Do not smoke.

(128) A xi vuyi xi khale.

Let the life of yesterday come back.

The life of yesterday is not coming back.

(129) Gada nsati wa wena

Guard your wife.

Have sex with your wife.

(130) Ekusuhi ni lawu ra vafana ku ni tshanga ra tihomu na timbhongolo.

Near the boys' house there is a cattle and a donkey kraal.

Near the boys' house there is a kraal for cattle and a kraal for donkeys.

(131) Mufana u senga tihomu na nsati wa yena.

The boy is milking the cows together with his wife.

The boy is milking both the cows and his wife.

(132) Swakudya na swakunwa swa tsokombela

Food and drinks are delicious.

Only drinks are nice.

(133) Vavanuna ni vavasati lavo tlhariha a va ha ri kona.

Both clever men and clever women are not there anymore.

Men are not there anymore and clever women are not there anymore.

(134) Vavanuna ni vavasati lavo tlhariha va kona.

Both clever men and clever women are there.

Men are there and clever women are there.

(135) Themba a nga twi.

Themba is deaf.

Themba does not listen.

(136) Tanani mi ta vona hala mahlweni.

Come and see what is here in front.

Come and see my genitals.

(137) Ku njhani?

How are you?

How is there?

(138) Xihlamariso u hlangane ni vafana na vanhwanyana lavo leha.

Xihlamariso met boys and tall girls.

Xihlamariso met tall boys and tall girls.

(139) Tatana wa mufana loyi na ntombi leyi va tava va ri kona entlangwini.

The father of this boy and of this girl will be at the party.

The father of this boy will be at the party.

(140) Ntiyiso na Samhemhi va tshama va karhi va lwa.

Ntiyiso always fights with Samhemhi.
Ntiyiso and Samhemhi always fight with someone.

(141) Nhlahla u tswale nwana wa mufana na xinhwanyetana.

Nhlahla gave birth to a baby boy and a baby girl.
Nhlahla and the young girl gave birth to a baby boy.

(142) Surprise u ni vana ni vavasati vanharhu.

Surprise is with children and three women.
Surprise has children and three women.
Surprise has children with three different women.

(143) Dlayani u rhandza Lucky ku hundza Leonard.

Dlayani loves Lucky more than Leonard.
Dlayani loves Lucky more than the way Leonard loves him.

(144) Phexi u hlohlotele Akani ku kondza a famba.

Phexi convinced Akani until Akani left.
Phexi convinced Akani that he (Phexi) should leave.

(145) Gezani u dye na n'wana hi ku rhandza swilo.

Gezani ate with the child for the love of things.
Gezani slept with the child for the love of things.

(146) N'wana loyi mhani wa yena a nga n'wi rhandzi.

This child does not love her mother.
The mother does not love her child.

(147) Mi kwihhi?

Where are you?
How are you?

(148) *U pfukile?*

Did you wake up?

How are you?

(149) *Ndzi kona.*

I am here.

I am well.

The part of the grammar that represents a speaker's knowledge of sentences and their structures is called syntax (Fromkin et al, 2007). Sometimes syntactical rules allow structures by its very nature for double interpretation. This, in many cases, might result in structural ambiguity. However, through the use of tree diagrams and grouping, it is possible to disambiguate structurally ambiguous sentences. This is discussed in the following subsection.

4.4 THE DISAMBIGUATION OF STRUCTURAL AMBIGUITY

This subsection looks at the disambiguation of structurally ambiguous sentences. This is made clear by the use of tree diagrams as well as the grouping of constituents. Four structurally ambiguous sentences are discussed.

(150) *Maphorisa va hlongorisa wanuna na mbyana.*

Police are chasing a man who has a dog.

Police are using a dog to chase a man.

One of the strategies that can be used to deal with structural ambiguity is the grouping together of certain words (Fromkin et al, 2007). The sentence *maphorisa va hlongorisa wanuna na mbyana* can be grouped in two ways. The first is illustrated in (150a) below.

(150a) *Maphorisa va [hlongorisa [wanuna na mbyana]*

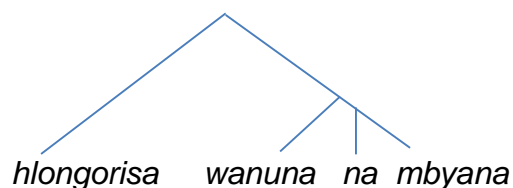
In the (150a) above, *wanuna* (man) and *mbyana* (dog) are grouped together so that the sentence can be translated as “the police officers are chasing both the man and the dog”. This reading is brought about by the grouping of *wanuna* and *mbyana* together through the help of the conjunction *na* (and). It is clear that the conjunction *na* (and) in Xitsonga has the potential of causing structural ambiguity. To illustrate the second meaning, the sentence above can further be grouped in the following way:

(150b) *Maphorisa va [hlongorisa wanuna] na mbyana]*

The grouping of the verb *hlongorisa* (chase) together with the noun *wanuna* (man) illustrates that police officers (*maphorisa*) are chasing only the man and not the dog. The man, who is being chased by the police, has a dog. He may be running with the dog, but it is the man that the police are after, and not the dog. Structural ambiguity can also be illustrated by means of tree diagrams. Figure 12 below is an illustrative of 150a above:

Figure 12: An illustration of structural ambiguity

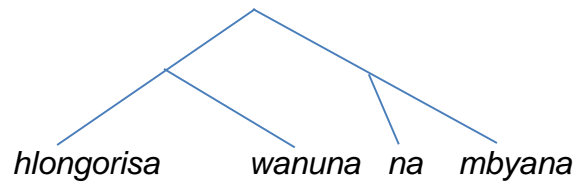
(150c)



The tree diagram in (150c) illustrates that both the nouns *wanuna* (man) and *mbyana* (dog) are joined together by the conjunction *na* (and) and are separate from the verb *hlongorisa* (chase). This implies that the referents of both nouns are affected by the action of the verb *hlongorisa* (chase). In simple terms, both the man and the dog are being chased by the police.

Figure 13: An illustration of structural ambiguity.

(150d)

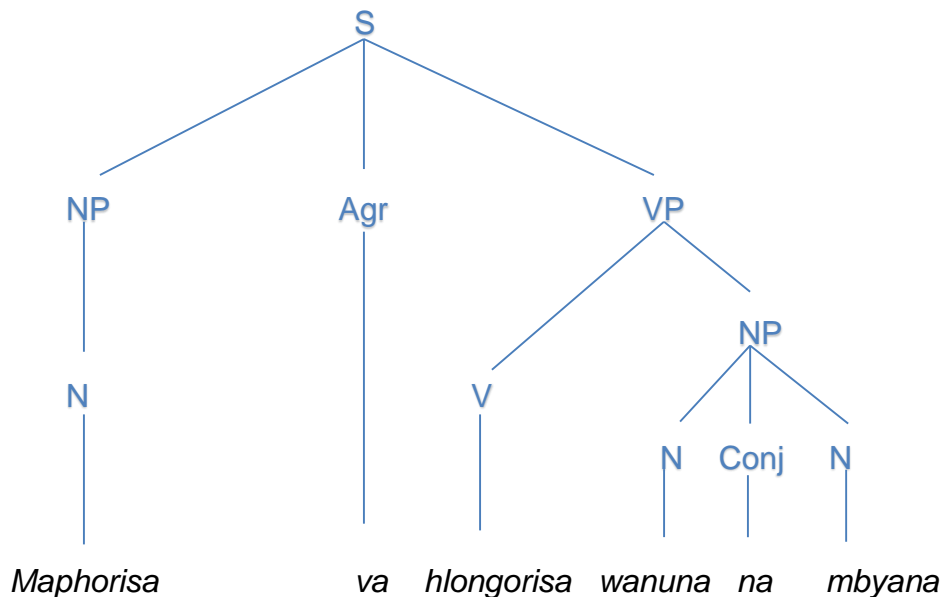


The diagram in (150d) illustrates that the verb *hlongorisa* (chase) affects only the noun *wanuna* (the man) and not *mbyana* (the dog). This basically means that only the man is being chased. The sentence *Maphorisa va hlongorisa wanuna na mbyana* can further be illustrated by a more expansive tree diagram. The following tree diagram illustrates the first meaning of this sentence:

Figure 14: An expansive illustration of structural ambiguity

(150e)

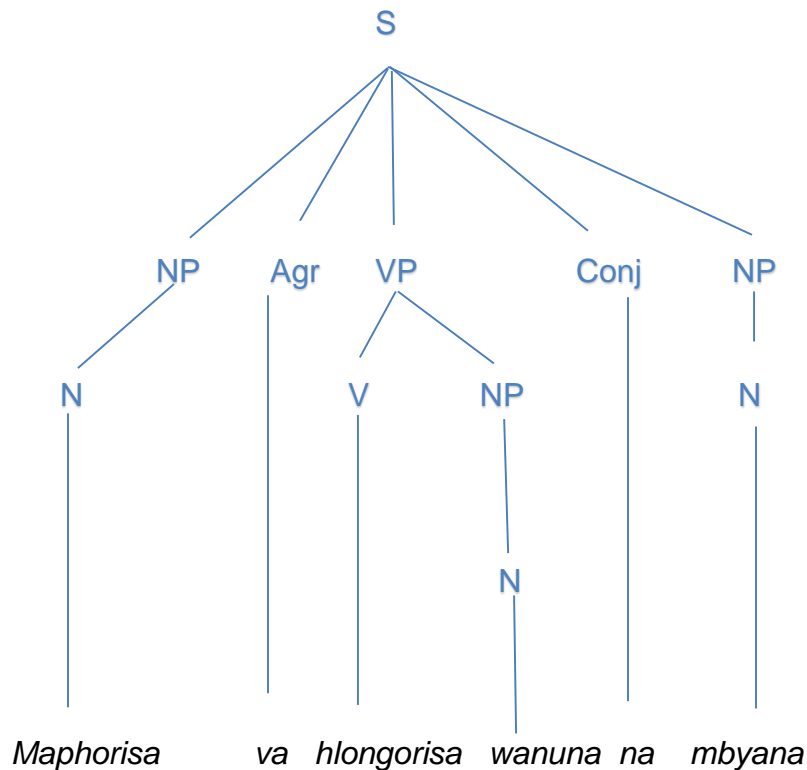
Maphorisa va hlongorisa wanuna na mbyana.



Phrase structure trees are graphic representation of a speaker’s knowledge of the sentence structure in their language. When information is syntactically catagorised in a tree diagram, it is called a phrase structure (Fromkin et al, 2007). The phrase structure tree above identifies the parts of speech of each of the elements of the construction: *maphorisa va hlongorisa wanuna na mbyana*. *Maphorisa* is shown as a noun (N), *va* as agreement (Agr), *hlongorisa* as a verb (V), *wanuna* as a noun, *na* as a conjunction (Conj) and *mbyana* as a noun. It is clear that although both Ns *wanuna* and *mbyana* are part of the VP, the V *hlongorisa* is separate from the NP *wanuna* and *mbyana*. In fact, the NP consists of the two Ns *wanuna* and *mbyana* joined by the Conj *na* (and). This is the reason why the action of the verb *hlongorisa* affects both Ns *wanuna* and *mbyana* simultaneously. This means that both the man and the dog are being chased. The phrase structure below illustrates the second meaning of the sentence, *maphorisa va hlongorisa wanuna na mbyana*.

Figure 15: A more expansive illustration of structural ambiguity.

(150f)



The tree diagram in (150f) shows that police are chasing only the man and not the dog. This is indicated by the fact that the noun *wanuna* is not grouped with the noun *mbyana*. That is, the only noun *wanuna* is receiving the action of the verb *hlongorisa*. As a result, the phrase structure tree in figure 7 illustrates that the police are only chasing the man while the dog is not affected by the action of the police. Another structural ambiguous sentence is discussed below.

(151) *Vavanuna ni vavasati vo nyuhela va tsutsuma.*

Fat men and fat women are running.

Men and fat women are running.

The sentence above has two meanings. The first meaning can be illustrated by the following grouping:

(151a) [*Vavanuna ni vavasati vo nyuhela*] *va tsutsuma*.

Fat men and fat women are running.

The expression above means that both men and women are fat (*nyuhela*). This becomes apparent because both the nouns *vavanuna* (men) and *vavasati* (women) are grouped together with their modifier adjective *nyuhela* (fat). The same sentence possesses a different meaning when it can be grouped in this way:

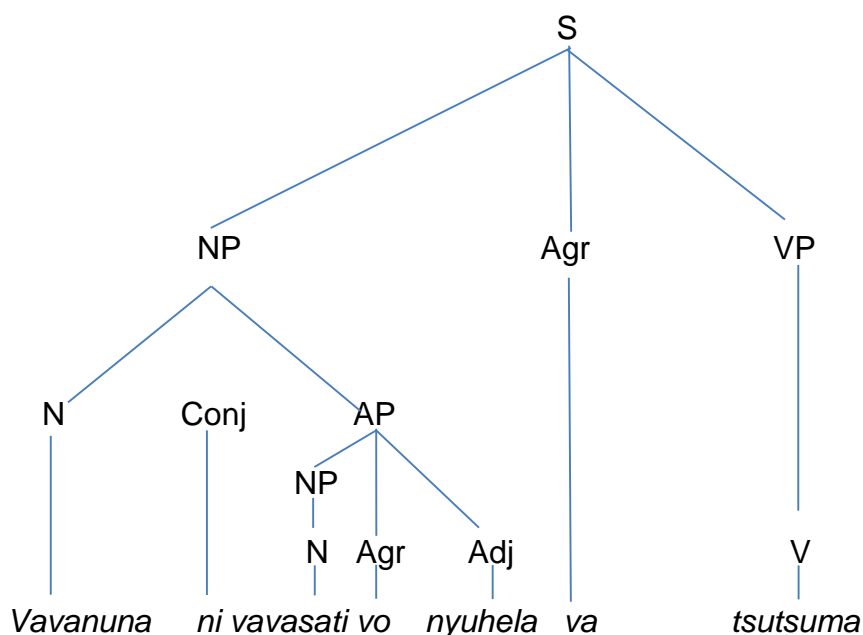
(151b) *Vavanuna ni* [*vavasati vo nyuhela*] *va tsutsuma*.

Fat women and men are running.

In the sentence in (151b) the adjective *nyuhela* (fat) modifies only the noun *vavasati*. This means that only women are fat. This can further be illustrated using the phrase structure tree below:

Figure 16: A more expansive illustration of structural ambiguity

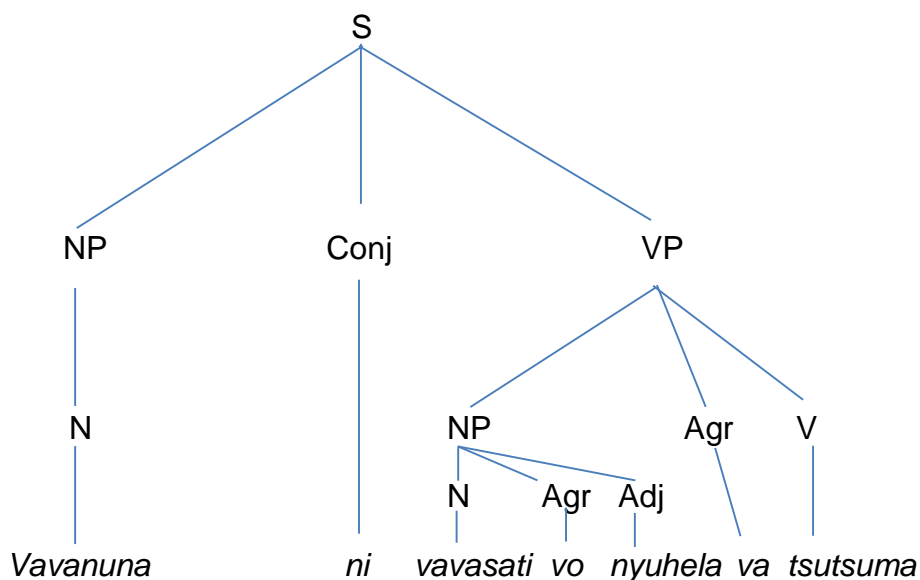
(151c) [*Vavanuna ni vavasati vo nyuhela*] *va tsutsuma*.



The phrase structure tree represents ambiguity of the NP *vavanuna ni vavasati vo nyuhela*. It is clear that *vavanuna* (men) and *vavasati* (women) are grouped together as NP in the phrase structure tree above. Therefore, it shows that both *vavanuna* (men) and *vavasati* (women) are fat. Another phrase structure tree with a different meaning is illustrated in the tree diagram below:

Figure 17: A more expansive illustration of structural ambiguity

(151d) *Vavanuna ni [vavasati vo nyuhela] va tsutsuma.*



The phrase structure tree in (151d) separates the N *vavanuna* (men) from the VP *vavasati vo nyuhela va tsutsuma* (fat women run). The grouping together of the N *vavasati* (women) and the adjective *nyuhela* (fat) in the VP shows that only women are fat. The noun *vavanuna* (men) is not part of the VP. Although *vavanuna* (men) are also running, they are not fat.

Apart from structural ambiguity caused by conjunctions, there are other types of structural ambiguities. The following illustrates this type:

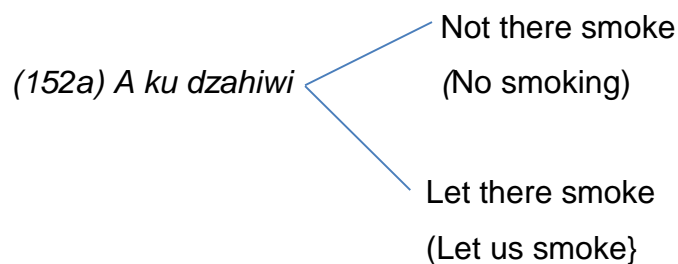
(152) *A ku dzahiwi.*

Let there smoke (Let us smoke).

Not there smoke (No smoking).

The expression *a ku dzahiwi* has a double meaning. The two meanings are represented by two different constructions: the 'let construction' and the 'adverb of negation construction'. The 'let construction' says 'let us smoke' and the adverbial construction states 'no smoking'. In the 'let construction', the initial element *a* is equivalent to 'let', *ku* to 'there' and the verb *dzaha* (smoke) is characterised by the suffix *-iw-i* where *-i* is a terminative. In the adverbial construction, the initial constituent *a* is equivalent to the negative 'not' and the rest of the words are the same as with the 'let construction'. In speech, the ambiguity of *a ku dzahiwi* is brought about by the way a person stresses the morpheme *a*. Where the speaker puts a high stress on the morpheme, the construction becomes a 'let construction' and reads as 'let us smoke'. But where the *a* is given a low stress, the sentence becomes an adverbial construction and is interpreted as 'no smoking'. The expression *a ku dzahiwi* can be illustrated as follows:

Figure 18: Illustration of structural ambiguity of *a ku dzahiwi*



The construction *a ku dzahiwi*, unlike other types of structural ambiguity, cannot be disambiguated simply by the addition of the necessary context, but by the reconstruction of the whole expression, as follows:

(152b) *Fole ri nga dzahiwi.*

Tobacco cannot be smoked.

(152c) *Fole ri nga dzahiwa.*

Tobacco can be smoked.

It is apparent from the expressions above that the reconstruction of the 'let/adverbial construction' results in the removal of ambiguity. In fact, this requires the addition of the subject *fole* (tobacco) to replace the ambiguous morpheme *a*. It also entails the removal of the morpheme *ku* (there) and its subsequent replacement by the morpheme *nga* (can) in each case. Furthermore, the adverb of negation is expressed by the verbal terminative *-i* (*dzahiwi-i*), and where the verb expresses a positive declarative construction (*fole ri nga dzahiwa*), this is shown by the normal verbal terminative *-a* (*dzahiwi-a*).

(153) *Ku njhani?*

How are you?

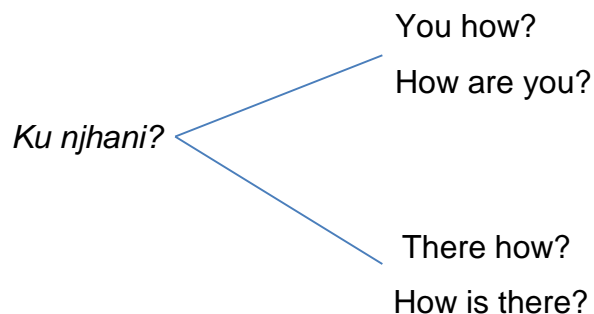
How is there?

The expression *Ku njhani* is commonly regarded as a greeting; hence the response is *ndzi kona* (I am fine). However, in the construction of the expression *ku njhani*, three morphemes are involved. *Ku* is equivalent to 'there' as well as the second person pronoun 'you', *njhani* is equivalent to 'how'. Therefore, the expression literally reads as 'there how' or 'you how'. In the case where the morpheme *ku* serves as an adverb of place, it will be 'there'. Where *ku* is used as a second person pronoun, the equivalent will be 'you'. The expression *Ku njhani* can refer to a place or a situation. Native speakers sometimes use such expressions for humorous purposes. For example: the speaker could say *ku njhani* but before the listener responds, the speaker might add *edorobeni* (in town). The statement is no longer greetings, instead, the speaker's interest is in 'how is it in town today' The ambiguity in the expression is due to the morpheme *ku* which is not clear whether it means 'there' or the second person pronoun 'you'.

The deep structure of *ku njhani?* is ‘how is there’ and ‘how are you’ but due to the listener’s knowledge of the language, the response could be *ndzi kona* ‘I am here’ or ‘I am well’. The following illustration clarifies this:

Figure 19: An illustration of the structural ambiguity of *ku njhani*.

(153a)



Another expression similar to *ku njhani* is illustrated below

(154) *Mi kwihhi?*

Where are you?

How are you?

The expression *Mi kwihhi* is ambiguous. *Mi kwihhi* may mean ‘where are you?’ or ‘how are you?’ In order to avoid the ambiguity, the speaker should say *mi le kwihhi?* (Where are you?) or *ku njhani Sonti* (how are you Sonti?).

4.5 SUMMARY

It is clear that in Xitsonga there are different types of homographs. These are words with the same orthography but different meanings. Consequently, these words are the causes of ambiguity. Just like in other languages, the use of homographs in sentences may result

in ambiguity. Under lexical ambiguity in Xitsonga, nominal, verbal and adjectival homographs as well as homographs belonging to different parts of speech have been discussed. Under structural ambiguity in Xitsonga, sentences with double or many interpretations have received attention. It has also been seen that it is possible to disambiguate sentences in Xitsonga. In this respect, grouping of constituents and tree diagrams have been used to illustrate the disambiguation.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to present the findings, and to make the conclusions and the recommendations of the study. The chapter starts with the findings, then the conclusions and finally, the recommendations.

5.2 FINDINGS

The study noted that there are many words and sentences with many different meanings in Xitsonga. These words may be misleading and may cause misunderstandings in everyday life. Words and sentences with many meanings usually result in ambiguity. There are many types of ambiguity, but the study focused only on two of them, that is, lexical and structural ambiguity. It appears that when people express themselves through language, either in the form of speaking or writing, they unconsciously become ambiguous. For an instance, *rivengo* in the sentence *rivengo a ri nandziki he boti*, could mean both 'spleen is not good brother' or 'hatred is not good brother'. Depending on the context given, the listener might find it hard to comprehend such an expression.

Some speakers bring about ambiguity for humorous purposes, making fun using language. The word *nenge* is commonly known to native Xitsonga speakers and others as a 'leg'. However, if the word could be used in certain expressions, it may contain ambiguity. *Bongani u ni tsone nenge* 'Bongani refused to have sex with me' or 'Bongani refused to give me some meat'. The expression is funny and somewhat vulgar. *Nenge* to the youth of today has to do with sex. But at the same time, it could be a chicken feet or meat of an animal such as a cow. So, the word *nenge* is lexically ambiguous.

The study reveals that lexical ambiguity manifests mostly in homonymous and polysemous words. The discussion above about the word *nenge* illustrates polysemy. In causing lexical ambiguity, homonyms are the most prevalent ones. Homonyms are words with different meanings. In contrast to polysemy, which means different words with related meanings, ambiguity occurs in expressions such as *Ndzi helele hi mafurha*. This could mean 'My cooking oil is finished, My petrol is finished or My body lotion is finished'. The equivalents of the word *mafurha* are petrol, body lotion and cooking oil in Xitsonga.

The listener might find it hard to comprehend the above expression *ndzi helele hi mafurha* unless there is a car which would explain that his/her *mafurha* refers to petrol. Alternatively, if someone is bathing, this would explain that he/she needs the body lotion for use on his or her body. When someone is cooking, the word *mafurha* may refer to cooking oil. Ambiguity of words in Xitsonga occurs mostly in verbs, nouns and adjectives.

As for structural ambiguity, it has emerged that there are many sentences with multiple meanings in Xitsonga. Structural ambiguities are sentences with many interpretations that lead to ambiguity. It has been noted that these ambiguities are mostly caused by the conjunction *na* 'and'. The conjunction *na* 'and' is not ambiguous. When used in a sentence *na* could result in ambiguity. The expression *vafana na vanhwana lavo saseka* is ambiguous. This could be interpreted as 'beautiful girls and boys' or 'boys and beautiful girls'. Apart from the conjunction '*na*', other ambiguities occur due to the structure of the sentence itself.

As discussed in chapter four, the expression *a ku dzahiwi* consists of two interpretations: 'let's smoke' and 'do not smoke'. This expression consists of the 'let' construction' and 'the adverb of negation construction'. Listeners rely on the stressed morphemes to grasp the meaning of the expression *a ku dzahiwi*. If the morpheme *a-* receives a high stress, the expression becomes the 'let' construction' that is 'let us smoke' and if *a* in the expression receives low stress, it becomes the adverb of negation which means 'do not smoke'. It was further discovered that in sentence construction, rules of syntax should be

followed always. That is, there must be an agreement between the subject and the object. The following section concludes the study.

5.3 CONCLUSIONS

As a part of language, a sentence or an utterance is an important constituent in the distribution of information. For this reason, a speaker or writer, as the informant, has to construct clear sentences in order to give express specific understanding. In concluding the study, it is believed that the objectives and the research questions of the study have been met. These are:

- to identify and discuss linguistic expressions that are lexically ambiguous in Xitsonga;
- to investigate structural ambiguity in Xitsonga;
- to differentiate between homonymous and polysemous words in Xitsonga; and
- to analyse the role of contexts in the disambiguation of communication breakdown caused by lexical and structural ambiguity.

The following are the responses to the research questions as stated in chapter one:

- Linguistic expressions that are lexically ambiguous in Xitsonga have been identified.
- Linguistic expressions that are structurally ambiguous in Xitsonga have been identified.
- Ways in which homonymy and polysemy cause lexical ambiguity have been discussed.
- It has become apparent that context assists in disambiguating sentences.

The study focused on the investigation of ambiguity in Xitsonga. In the process, lexical and structural ambiguities were discovered. There are other ambiguities such as scope and phonetic ambiguity. However, the main focal point was on structural and lexical ambiguity. The following section looks at the recommendations of the study.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The research confirmed that it is possible to get lexical and structural ambiguity in Xitsonga. In South Africa there are eleven official languages. These languages are isiZulu, Tshivenda, Setswana, isiNdebele, Northern Sotho, Sesotho, isiXhosa, English, Afrikaans, IsiSwati as well as Xitsonga. The topic under investigation focused on Xitsonga ambiguity. Other researchers can embark on this particular topic to bring about new knowledge to the society. In so doing, it will also improve on the sociolinguistics of the language. In the quest to find this new information, it should be possible to get similar ambiguities amongst languages other than Xitsonga and English.

Qualitative method of inquiry was employed in this study because it focused on the description of Xitsonga. Data was collected through observation of Xitsonga speakers as the researcher is also a Xitsonga speaker. It is therefore recommended that future researchers could embark on a similar study but using other methods of inquiry such as the quantitative method. The aim would be to find out if the same data could be drawn by using different methods such as going to the field to collect data through interviews and questionnaires.

The researcher used illustrations and tree diagrams to analyse lexical and structural ambiguity. Therefore, it will be worthwhile for scholars researching on this topic to use other strategies. That is, by making use of formulas, patterns, hierarchies, graphs and

charts to see if it is possible to explain ambiguity and its disambiguation. The subject of ambiguity cannot be dealt with exhaustively hence more research still needs to be done.

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