EXPANSION OF VOCABULARY IN THE KENYAN SIGN LANGUAGE
USED BY THE PEOPLE WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENTS IN KAREN
 VOCATIONAL TRAINING INSTITUTE.

BY

ESTHER WANGUI KIMANI

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ENGLISH AND LINGUISTICS DEPARTMENT

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DECLARATION

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

Signature

Date 27/9/2011

ESTHER WANGUI KIMANI

We confirm that the work reported in this dissertation was carried out by the candidate under our supervision.

Signature

Date 20/1/2011

DR. PHYLLIS MWANGI
SUPERVISOR

Signature

Date 27/9/2011

DR. JOYCE WANGIA
SUPERVISOR

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND LINGUISTICTS
KENYATTA UNIVERSITY
ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the expansion of vocabulary in the Kenyan Sign Language. The main objectives of the study were: to explore what processes of lexicon expansion are evident in KSL, to find out which of the identified processes is most prevalent in the expansion of the KSL vocabulary across the KSL dialects, and to evaluate whether the Kenyan Sign Language communicates figuratively. The review of related literature includes literature on Sign Language in general, the revolution of a vocabulary item, the processes of lexicon expansion in sign languages and figurative language. This study has used two theories. The first is a morphological theory within the linguistic model of Generative Grammar initiated by Chomsky. This is the Full Entry Theory of the Lexicon. The second is the Core Peripheral Model of the Lexicon. The study was carried out at the University of Nairobi and at the Karen Vocational Training Institute for the Deaf that is in Nairobi West District. At the University of Nairobi, the sampled members of the Kenyan Sign Language Research Project were interviewed using a pre-prepared interview schedule. At the Karen Vocational Institute for the Deaf, the sampled post secondary students were interviewed as well. Qualitative and quantitative data analysis approaches were used. This was followed by a comprehensive presentation of the analysed data where descriptions, tables, pie charts and bar graphs were used. The study found that the KSL uses five processes in the expansion of its vocabulary. These processes are compounding, semantic expansion, coinage, reduplication and borrowing. Coinage was identified as the most prevalent process of lexicon expansion across the KSL dialects. This study also discovered that KSL communicates figuratively only to a very small extent.