

## **Synonymy in the language 's mental exicon**

**Henry Rugaiganisa Tilengerwa Muzale**

**Master of Arts (Linguistics)**

**University of Dar es Salaam, College of Humanities**

This study observes the extent to which advanced English language learner are able to discriminate synonymous lexemes using the lexical information that one has in the mental lexicon. It presents problems that learners face in trying to attribute stylistic labels like formal, informal, slang, taboo, and euphemism to lexical items in the process of memorizing, retaining and retrieving lexemes from the mental lexicon. A model which summarizes the phenomenon of lexical discrimination is presented in chapter one. The model shows the complexity of the issue that non-native language learners face in their process of learning and applying lexical items. The study is thus based on the three levels of synonymy in the mental lexicon namely, identification, discrimination and application. The findings, which are presented and discussed in chapter three, show a number of problems facing these language learners and thus leading to some distortions in the mental lexicon. Various causes for some of these problems are discussed. In the summary, a model that summarizes the phenomenon of lexical development in the language learner's mental lexicon is suggested. The model is a result of the findings of this study and some observations from other studies as presented in the literature review. The model shows the mutual interconnection between the linguistic input and social/psychological conditions of the mental lexicon for its lexical development.