

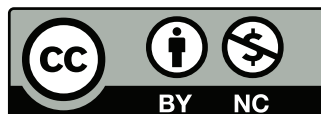
Translating Swahili linguistic terminology into Italian

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ABSTRACT

This article investigates the process of translating Swahili linguistic terminology into Italian as a way to reflect upon the metalinguistic representation of two different language structures. On the one hand, some terms of ancient Greek etymology, such as the English loanwords *fonolojia* 'phonology', *fonimu* 'phoneme', and *mofimu* 'morpheme', can be easily translated into Italian as 'fonologia', 'fonema', and 'morfema'; on the other hand, some conceptual correspondences appear more problematic, especially in the field of morphology. There are terms that specifically refer to Bantu linguistic concepts, such as *viambishi nyambulishi vya vitenzi* 'verbal extensions', (it) 'estensioni verbali'. Moreover, several synonyms that indicate the concept of "structure" (i.e. *muundo* 'structure', *uambajengo* '(syntactic) structure,' *tungo* 'construction') have different uses according to the linguistic context; thus, I have suggested a translation based on the etymology (Tramutoli, 2018). The study is based on a corpus of approximately 150 linguistic terms mostly collected during Swahili linguistic lectures at the Department of Swahili Studies (TATAKI) at the University of Dar es Salaam.

Keywords: Swahili, Italian, linguistics, linguistic terminology, translation



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About the author

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1 Introduction

This article describes and analyses differences and convergences in the metalinguistic terminology used to represent the two genetically and typologically unrelated language systems of Swahili and Italian. I argue that the way in which Swahili linguistic terminology is constructed reflects Bantu metalinguistic representation. The study is based on an analysis of linguistic lemmas contained in the Swahili–Italian linguistic glossary (Tramutoli 2018). The corpus of Swahili terminology was collected in 2010 during classes in Swahili linguistics in the Department of Swahili Studies (TATAKI) at the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania.¹ The glossary’s target audience is chiefly made up of Italian L1 students and researchers interested in the Swahili language, for which reason the translation of linguistic terms took into account the terminology used in academic teaching contexts.²

This comparative analysis shows the usefulness of translating linguistic terminology into a language other than English, because the project required reflections about the Swahili terms themselves, rather than looking at translations into English vocabulary. Approximately 20 terms (out of around 150 lemmas) in this linguistic corpus are loanwords from English. These mostly include transliterations of English terms which describe the different levels of the linguistic analysis (e.g. terms of ancient Greek etymology such as *fonetiki* ‘phonetics’, *fonolojia* ‘phonology’, *morfolojia* ‘morphology’, *semantiki* ‘semantics’, and *pragmatiki* ‘pragmatics’). A few terms appear as calques of English metalinguistic concepts that belong to the generative grammar tradition; for instance, the label for ‘transformational generative grammar’ itself is translated in Swahili as *sarufi-geuzamaumbo-zalishi* (lit. *sarufi* ‘grammar’; *-geuza* ‘change, modify’; *maumbo* (cl. 6) ‘shape, form’; *-zalishi*, adjective from the verb *-zalisha* ‘cause to give birth’, composed of *-zaa* ‘give birth’ + the causative suffix *-lisha*) (Castagneto 2014, 418–419).

However, most of the Swahili linguistic terms, especially in the field of morphology and syntax, have been created reflecting the Swahili metalinguistic concepts that they represent. In other words, the linguistic labels themselves encode the linguistic processes that characterize Bantu languages. For instance, the terms belonging to the semantic domain of affixation are derived from the verb *-ambisha* (lit. ‘put a boat alongside another’), such as *u-ambish-aji* ‘affixation’, ‘affissazione’, is composed by the verb *-ambisha* preceded by the noun class prefix *u-* (cl. 14), which usually refers to abstract concepts or processes, and followed by the agentive suffix *-aji* (similar to *-fundisha* ‘teach’ → *u-fundish-aji* ‘education, teaching’). Similarly, the term *ki-ambish-i* ‘affix’, ‘affisso’ is a deverbative noun composed by adding to the verb stem *-ambisha* the class prefix *ki-* (cl. 7), which usually refers to inanimate objects and the agentive suffix *-i* (e.g. the verb *-pika* ‘cook’ → noun *m-pish-i* ‘cook’). Swahili noun morphology involves small units attached to a root, thus recalling the original etymology of the verb *-ambisha* ‘put a boat alongside another’, in analogy to the morphemes added in derivational processes.

Below, I will show how translating linguistic terminology can be seen as an opportunity to

¹ The glossary is composed of around 150 lemmas from the fields of phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. The Swahili definitions of some linguistic terms are taken from the monolingual linguistic dictionary (Massamba 2016) and from lectures on Swahili linguistics attended at TATAKI (Swahili Department of Linguistic Studies of the University of Dar es Salaam) in 2010. I wish to thank Dr. Hans Mussa, Dr. Angelus Mnenuka, and the lecturers in Linguistic Studies at TATAKI for their comments on Swahili linguistic terminology. I am extremely grateful to the students studying for a BA in Education at the University of Dar es Salaam (2010) for their precious contributions to this research.

² The courses offered at the Department of Swahili Studies TATAKI are taught exclusively in Swahili.

compare descriptions of two linguistic systems, both the Source Language (SL) and the Target Language (TL), in our case Swahili and Italian.³

According to Cabré,

Beyond its instrumental function, terminology also serves translators as a means for acquiring knowledge about a special domain.... In this sense, terminology has a metacognitive function as it helps translators to organize their knowledge on the subject, and provides them the lexical units (terms) to express the specialized knowledge units of the field adequately. (Cabré 2010, 358)

Cabré also highlights the cognitive function of terminology:

From the cognitive point of view, terms constitute conceptual units representing nodes of knowledge which are necessary and relevant in the content structure of a field of specialty and which are projected linguistically through lexical units.... The first function of terms, therefore, is the *representation* of specialized knowledge. (Cabré 2010, 357)

The problem of translating technical (linguistic) vocabulary, implying reflection on different metalinguistic representations, has been investigated by several scholars (Abdellah 2003; Cabré 2010; Giaber 2017). In his study on translating English linguistic terminology into Arabic, Abdellah (2003, 1–2) points out the complexity of translating terminology in any field of science, noting how the task, far from involving a simple substitution of the source language's term using the target language's vocabulary, often implies that the translator may take recourse to a number of other "translating strategies that aim at delimiting the level of non-equivalence". As Abdellah continues, "although Arabs have their own version of the linguistic terms, the Arabic term sometimes does not convey all the meanings and uses of a certain linguistic term according to the modern theories of Linguistics, in which case the old Arabic term will not be the proper equivalent and the translator has to work out whether or not Arab Academies have translated that term in its modern theoretical sense" (Abdellah 2003, 2). Giaber (2017, 1) observes that the polysemic value of the English suffix *-ism* has some implications for the translation of linguistic terms into Arabic. For instance, one of the strategies used in translating the meaning of the English suffix *-ism* is to use one of the three Arabic noun terms *madhhab* 'school of thought', *nazaryya* 'theory', or *falsafa* 'philosophy,' to represent the concept denoted by *-ism* in English (Giaber 2017, 7).

For this comparative study, Italian was chosen as the target language due to the solid academic tradition of Swahili studies in Italy. For many years, the University of Naples "L'Orientale" has been established as an internationally renowned research school of Swahili studies on language, linguistics, and literature. More recently, the University of Turin has also emerged as an important academic center for Swahili studies in Italy. Thus, considering the prestige of the Italian research academies for Swahili studies in the world, the question of terminological translation into Italian thus becomes topical.

I will show that some Swahili terms, such as the ancient Greek-derived English loanwords (e.g. *fonolojia* 'phonology'; *fonimu* 'phoneme'; *mofimu* 'morpheme'), can easily be translated

³ The Italian translations of the linguistic terms are taken from Tramutoli (2018).

into Italian (e.g. ‘fonologia’, ‘fonema’, and ‘morfema’, respectively), while other terms are more ambiguous and require deep reflection and detailed explication.⁴ The most challenging terms in the corpus belong to the field of morphology and syntax. For the Italian translation of some terms, I have found it necessary to resort to the strategy of using a periphrastic label to convey the meaning of a single Swahili word (e.g. *utendea* ‘applicative extension’, ‘estensione verbale applicativa’). With other terms, the Italian translation, which is apparently an equivalent label, can be misleading because there is no exact conceptual correspondence (e.g. *kivumishi* ‘adjective’, ‘aggettivo’ and *kiwakilishi* ‘pronoun’, ‘pronome’). Considering the use of *kivumishi* ‘adjective’ in Swahili as a qualifier of the noun, the Italian translation ‘aggettivo’ seems too generic and inaccurate, since adjectives in Italian can also have possessive and demonstrative functions. In Swahili, adjectives are not as numerous as in Italian, and in the context of linguistic teaching, the term *kivumishi* commonly refers to ‘qualifier/determiner’, ‘qualificatore/determinante’ (of the noun). I will show, in fact, that Swahili uses the label *kiwakilishi* ‘pronoun’, ‘pronome’ to refer to those possessives and demonstratives that also behave functionally as determiners of the noun and that would be rather defined in Italian as ‘adjectives’, ‘aggettivi’.⁵

Finally, for terms that are conceptually very similar, it is difficult to find unambiguous translations (e.g. *muundo* ‘structure’; *uambajengo* ‘structure’; *tungo* ‘construction’). In cases where the translation is ambiguous because two or more terms have similar meanings, even though they occur in different contexts, I propose translations based on etymology.

The most difficult areas for translating Swahili linguistic terms into Italian were the following:

- Terms referring to Bantu linguistic concepts (Section 2);
- Different use of Swahili and Italian terminology (Section 3); and
- Synonyms and their use: translating linguistic terms on the basis of etymology (Section 4).

2 Terms referring to Bantu linguistic concepts

There are terms specifically referring to the Bantu linguistic system, such as *kiambishi nyambulishi cha vitenzi*, usually translated as ‘verbal extension’ or ‘verbal derivation’, ‘estensione verbale’ (Bertoncini Zùbková 2009). This expression indicates the verbal derivational suffixes that modify the meaning of the verbal stem. The term *nyambulishi* ‘derivational’, which recalls the process of *unyambulishaji*, ‘derivation’, ‘derivazione’, comes from the Swahili verbal stem *-nyambua*, ‘stretch, conjugate, derive’, with the addition of two verbal suffixes: the applicative suffix *-li-*⁶ and the causative suffix *-sh-*.⁷ Thus, in Swahili linguistics, this term refers to the morphological process of affixation, which creates new derived words or changes word categories. Another term for ‘affixation’, ‘affissazione’ is *uambishaji* (cl. 14). It has an interesting etymology, closely connected with the Swahili cultural context, as it derives from the verb *-ambisha*, which literally means ‘put a boat alongside another esp by bringing a small boat alongside a

⁴ For a complete list of the Swahili linguistic terms and their English and Italian translations, see Appendix 1.

⁵ For a more detailed explanation of *kivumishi* (adjective) and *kiwakilishi* (pronoun), see Section 3.

⁶ The suffix *-li-* is an allomorph of the applicative suffix *-i-*, applicable to verbs with roots ending with a vowel (Bertoncini Zùbková 2009, 124).

⁷ The suffix *-sh-* is a phonological transformation of the original causative suffix *-Y-* (Bertoncini Zùbková 2009, 148).

big one' (Mohamed 2011, 15). Thus, the terms *kiambishi* (cl. 7) 'affix', 'affisso' and *uambishaji* (cl. 14) 'affixation', 'affissione' are metaphorically rooted in a nautical image. Swahili noun morphology involves small units attached to a root in analogy to boats.

Similarly, *kiundaji* 'derivational suffix', 'suffisso derivazionale', a synonym of *kiambishi* 'affix', 'affisso' derives from the verbal stem *-unda* 'construct, build' and refers to the morphological process of *uundaji wa maneno* 'word derivation', 'derivazione nominale' – that is, the construction of *maneno unde* 'derived words', 'parole derivate' from *maneno asili* 'simple words', 'parole semplici'.

In the process of formation of *viundaji cha vitenzi* (sg. *kiundaji cha vitenzi*) 'verbal extensions', 'estensione verbali', the word category – that is, the verb – does not change. However, these morphemes have the property of modifying verb valency, often changing the syntactic structure of the sentence.

This relation is clearly expressed in the metalinguistic representation of Swahili terminology. The terms in class 14 (e.g. *u-tendea* 'applicative extension', *u-tendwa* 'passive extension', *u-tendeshi* 'causative extension') refer to different types of verbal extensions that modify the meaning of the verbal stem.

Swahili nouns with a *u-* prefix (cl. 14) usually refer to abstract concepts, for instance, *-zuri* 'nice, good' → *u-zuri* 'beauty' or *-penda* 'to love' → *u-pendo* 'love'. Similarly, terms like *u-tend-e-a* 'applicative extension' or *u-tend-w-a* 'passive extension' refer to abstract linguistic processes and emphasize the morpho-syntactic relations modified by the verbal suffixes attached to the root, respectively *-e-* (applicative suffix) and *-w-* (passive suffix).

From a morphological point of view, the suffix that modifies the meaning of the verb is indicated in Swahili by the terms *ki-ambishi* 'affix', 'affisso' and *ki-undaji cha vitenzi* 'derivational suffix', 'suffisso derivazionale', both of which belong to class 7/8 (*ki-/vi-*). Nouns assigned to this class usually indicate inanimate objects, and in this context refer to the morphemes (verbal derivative suffixes) added to the verb stem.

In Swahili, the morpho-syntactic processes of verbal derivation are represented by the Swahili linguistic terms themselves (e.g. *u-tend-w-a*, *u-tend-ek-a*, etc.), whereas in Italian, like in English, it is necessary to render this concept using a multi-word expression (e.g. 'passive extension', 'estensione passiva'; 'neuter or neutro-passive extension', 'estensione statica-potenziale'; etc.). In other words, the Bantu verbal derivation process is meta-linguistically encoded in the Swahili linguistic terminology itself.

Table 1 gives the most common Swahili verbal extensions and their corresponding Italian translation.⁸

⁸ For the Swahili terms indicating the verbal extensions and their corresponding Italian translations, see Tramutoli (2018). The Italian labels are taken from the Swahili grammar by Bertocini Zúbková (2009). For the English labels, see Thompson and Schleicher (2001, 262) and Schadeberg and Bostoen (2019, 173).

Table 1: Swahili verbal extensions

a) <i>utendwa</i>	-w- indicates a passive action; ‘passive extension’, ‘estensione passiva’, e.g. <i>-pig-w-a</i> ‘be beaten’, <i>-som-w-a</i> ‘be read; be studied’
b) <i>utendeka</i>	-ik-/-ek- indicates a static or potential action; ‘neutro-passive extension’, ‘estensione statica-potenziale’ ⁹ e.g. <i>-som-ek-a</i> ‘be readable; be read’, <i>-vung-ik-a</i> ‘be breakable; be broken’
c) <i>utendeshi</i>	-ish-/-esh-/-iz-/-ez- indicates the cause of the action; ‘causative extension’, ‘estensione causativa’, e.g. <i>-som-esh-a</i> ‘teach, educate’, lit. ‘make someone study’, <i>-pand-ish-a</i> ‘make someone climb’
d) <i>utendea</i>	-i-/-e-/-li-/-le- indicates the movement of the action towards something or someone; ‘applicative extension’, ‘estensione applicativa’ e.g. <i>-lal-i-a</i> ‘sleep on (at, in, etc.)’, <i>-ende-le-a</i> ‘go on, continue’
e) <i>ubadilifu</i>	-o-/-u- indicates the opposite action of the original; ‘reversive extension’, ‘estensione contraria’, e.g. <i>-chom-o-a</i> ‘draw out’, <i>-fung-u-a</i> ‘open’
f) <i>ufungamanishi</i>	-am- indicates the state of things (e.g. inactivity); ‘positional (stative) extension’, ‘estensione statica’, e.g. <i>-fich-am-a</i> ‘be hidden’, <i>-kw-am-a</i> ‘be stuck’
g) <i>ushikanishi</i>	-at- indicates the action of pressing, grabbing; ‘tentive (contactive) extension’, ‘estensione contattiva o tenace’; e.g. <i>-fumb-at-a</i> ‘clutch in the hand’, <i>-kam-at-a</i> ‘hold, catch’
h) <i>utendanishi</i>	-an- indicates a reciprocal action; ‘reciprocal extension’, ‘estensione reciproca’; e.g. <i>-on-an-a</i> ‘meet, see each other’, <i>-pend-an-a</i> ‘love each other’

Similarly, the expression *upatanishi wa kisarufi* ‘grammatical agreement’, ‘accordo grammaticale’ belongs to class 14; the noun prefix *u-* indicates an abstract morphological process. The term *upatanishi* ‘agreement’, ‘accordo’ derives from the verb stem *-pata* ‘obtain; get’ with the addition of two verbal extensions: *-an-* (reciprocal), *-pat-an-a* ‘agree’; and *-ish-* (causative), *-pat-an-ish-a* ‘bring to agreement’. In Swahili, as in other Bantu languages, grammatical agreement is marked by a noun prefix, that is, *kiambishi cha nomino* ‘noun class prefix’, ‘classificatore nominale’. The term *ki-ambishi* ‘prefix’, ‘prefisso’ derives from the verb *-ambisha* ‘affix’ preceded by the noun-class prefix *ki-* (cl. 7).

Unlike in Bantu languages, which are characterized by noun classes (see examples 1 and 2 below), in Italian, as in other European languages with inflectional systems, grammatical agreement is marked through gender-based suffixes (masculine, feminine, singular, plural), which regulate the relationship between the elements of the sentence (examples 1a and 2a below).

In example (1) below, *m-sichana* ‘girl’ (class 1, animate) is marked by the noun-class

⁹ This verbal derivational suffix (*-ik-/-ek-*) can have two different functions: when indicating a “state,” it usually occurs with the verb marker *-ME-* (perfect tense with resultative meaning); when indicating “potentiality,” it is usually found with the present tense verb marker *-NA-* (Bertoncini Zùbková 2009).

prefix *m-* with agreeing markers on agreeing elements (i.e. *m-zuri* ‘nice’, *m-refu* ‘tall’) and the subject concord *a-* refers to animate third person singular (*a-na-vaa* ‘she is wearing’). In example (2), the corresponding plural *wa-sichana* ‘girls’ (cl. 2, animate) is marked by the noun-class prefix *wa-* (i.e. *wa-zuri* ‘nice’, *wa-refu* ‘tall’, *wa-na-vaa* ‘they are wearing’); the same is seen with class 5 *gauni* ‘dress’ (zero prefix) with the agreeing element *j-ekundu* ‘red’ and its plural *ma-gauni* ‘dresses’ (cl. 6), prefixed with *ma-* with the agreeing qualifier *ma* + *-ekundu* ‘red’.

- (1) *M-sichana m-zuri m-refu a-na-va-a gauni j-ekundu.*
 1-girl 1-nice 1-tall 3SG-PRS-wear-FV 5.dress 5-red
 ‘A nice tall girl is wearing a red dress.’

- (1a) *Un-a bell-a ragazz-a alt-a indoss-a un abit-o ross-o.*
 ART-FSG nice-FSG girl-FSG tall-FSG wear-3SG ART dress-MSG red-MSG
 ‘A nice tall girl is wearing a red dress.’

- (2) *Wa-sichana wa-zuri wa-refu wa-na-va-a ma-gauni m-ekundu.*
 2-girl 2-nice 2-tall 3PL-PRS-wear-FV 6-dresses 6-red
 ‘Nice tall girls are wearing red dresses.’

- (2a) *Del-le bell-e ragazz-e alt-e indoss-a-no abit-i ross-i.*
 PART-ART.FPL nice-FPL girl-FPL tall-FPL wear-PRS-3PL dress-MPL red-MPL
 ‘Nice tall girls are wearing red dresses.’

In Italian, as in other romance languages, there are verbal prefixes that change the meaning of the verb, such as *ri-*, *de-*, and *dis-*; compare with the Italian ‘fare’ ‘do’, ‘ri-fare’ ‘do again’ (cf. the French ‘re-faire’; the Spanish ‘re-hacer’); ‘colorare’ ‘color’, ‘de-colorare’ ‘decolor’ (cf. the French ‘dé-colorer’; the Spanish ‘de-colorar’), ‘armare’ ‘arm’, ‘dis-armare’ ‘disarm’ (cf. the French ‘dés-armaer’; the Spanish ‘des-armar’). However, verbal affixation in these languages is not as productive as it is in Swahili and similar Bantu languages, which employ a number of highly productive verbal extensions modifying both the meaning and the valency of the verbs to which they attach.

The term *urejeshi* ‘relative’, ‘relativo’ refers to the typical Bantu relative clause. This term literally means ‘reference’, from the verb *-rejea* ‘return; refer to’ and indicates in Swahili the grammatical relationship between the element of the sentence and the corresponding relative morphemes attached to the verbal stem.

In Italian this relationship is expressed by subordinate relative clauses. However, while in Italian the connecting reference elements are relative pronouns, in Swahili this relationship is expressed by relative morphemes attached to the verbal stem (example (3) below).¹⁰ This relationship of subordination is referred to as *urejeshi*, a noun belonging to class 14 (noun class pre-

¹⁰ Swahili has three morphologically distinct relative verb constructions (Schadeberg 1989, 33).

fix *u-*), since it indicates the abstract relationship between the relative affix and the corresponding noun. The presence of affixes which can modify the state of the constituents of the sentence is a fundamental feature of Bantu sentence structure, as we can observe in example (3).

- (3) *Daktari u-li-ye-mw-on-a a-ki-pand-a basi jana,*
5.doctor 2SG-PST-REL-OBJ-see-FV 3SG-PROG-take-FV 5.bus yesterday
'The doctor, **whom** you saw taking the bus yesterday,
a-me-ham-ish-i-w-a hospitali ny-ingine.
3SG-PRF-transfer-CAUS-APPL-PASS-FV 9.hospital 9-other
was transferred to another hospital.'

In the context of linguistic teaching, the relative morpheme *-ye-* is defined as *urejeshi*, since it represents the grammatical unit that creates the subordinate relationship (i.e. *kishazi kirejeshi* 'relative clause', 'frase relativa') with the following main sentence.

In Swahili linguistics, the relative morphemes (*-o-*; *-ye-*; *-yo-*) attach to the verbal stem, and even though functionally similar to the Italian relative pronoun, 'pronome relativo' are not described as *kiwakilishi* 'pronoun,' 'pronome.' Instead, in Swahili linguistics the term *urejeshi* 'relative (clause)' highlights the syntactic function of the relative element within the sentence construction, rather than its morphological feature. In other words, these relative morphemes indicate the degree of subordination of the sentence. Thus, I suggested that the Swahili term *urejeshi* be translated using the Italian label 'relativo' (Tramutoli 2018), because it encodes a generic meaning, referring both to the relative morpheme and to the syntactic relationship between the relative clause and the main sentence.

3 Different uses of Swahili and Italian terminology

The term *kivumishi* (pl. *vivumishi*) is defined as *neni linalotoa taarifa zaidi juu ya nomino inayohusika* 'A word which gives more information about the noun concerned' (Massamba 2016, 57).¹¹ Apparently, the term *kivumishi* 'adjective' could be directly translated in Italian as 'aggettivo'. However, looking at the use context of *kivumishi*, I noted that this translation is inadequate and that a more appropriate label would be '(noun) qualifier/determiner', 'qualificatore/determinante del nome' (Tramutoli 2010, 30).

According to the morphological criterion, *kivumishi* is defined as *neni ambalo hubeba viambishi vinavyotokana na nomino* 'a word that carries affixes which depend on the noun'; according to its function, *kivumishi* is described as *neni ambalo huvumisha nomino, ukibadilisha nomino kile kiambishi cha nomino kinabadilika* 'a word that gives explanations about the noun; in changing the noun, its noun class prefix also changes' (Mohamed 2010a).

Kivumishi derives from the verb *-vuma*, literally 'roar'; also 'be in the air; be a subject of common talk, be the talk of the town; spread, circulate' (Mohamed 2011, 854); the causative form *-vum-ish-a* means 'spread the voice', thus 'give information'.

¹¹ All English translations of Massamba's (2016) definitions are mine.

Some examples of *vivumishi* ‘adjectives’, ‘aggettivi’:

<i>m-toto</i>	<i>m-refu</i>	‘tall child’
1-child	1-tall	
<i>n-jia</i>	<i>n-defu</i>	‘long street’
9-street	9-long	

According to the classification offered by Kihore, Massamba, and Msanjila (2008), in Swahili, as in Italian, there are four main groups of *vivumishi* ‘adjectives’, ‘aggettivi’: *cha sifa* ‘of quality’, ‘qualificativo’; *cha idadi* ‘of quantity’, ‘di quantità’; *kiulizi* ‘interrogative’, ‘interrogativo’; and *cha pekee* ‘reflexive’, ‘riflessivo’. In contrast to Italian, *vivumishi* always follow the noun in Swahili.

However, in Swahili, adjectives are not as numerous as in Italian. Thus, in the context of linguistic teaching, the term *kivumishi* commonly refers to *kivumishi cha sifa* ‘qualificative adjective’, ‘aggettivo qualificativo’, e.g. *safi*¹² ‘clean, pure’, *-chafu* ‘dirty’, *-baya* ‘bad, ugly’, *-refu* ‘long’, and *-dogo* ‘small’.

In the Swahili grammar for Italian L1 users by Bertoncini Zùbková (2009, 13), these have been described as ‘dependent nominals’, ‘nominali dipendenti’ rather than ‘adjectives’, since, according to their morphological features, they generally follow the agreement of noun class prefixes, in contrast to the ‘verb-pronominals’, ‘verbo-pronominali’ which follow the class-prefix verbal agreement patterns (e.g. demonstratives or possessives).

Thus, a more appropriate Italian translation for the term *kivumishi* ‘adjective’ could be ‘determinante’ or ‘qualificativo (del nome)’. However, since the Swahili–Italian linguistic glossary is addressed to Italian L1 students, the translation ‘aggettivo’ was preferred since it is the nearest equivalent to the original linguistic term in its current use.

Determiners having the function of possessives and demonstratives were not included in Kihore, Massamba, and Msanjila’s (2008) classification of Swahili adjectives, since, in contrast to other adjectives, they are morphologically pronouns, being preceded by verbal pronominal class prefixes.

Thus, the traditional definition of *kiwakilishi* ‘pronoun’ as a ‘[g]rammatical unit which has the function of representing the noun in different contexts’ (Kihore, Massamba, and Msanjila 2008, 148) is problematic as regards possessives and demonstratives, which also behave functionally as determiners of the noun.

The term *kiwakilishi* ‘pronoun’, ‘pronomine’, derived from the verbal stem *-wakilisha* ‘to represent’, implies representation of the noun, in contrast to the older term used in primary schools, *kibadala* (from the verb *-badili* ‘substitute’), which indicates the complete omission of the substituted noun. In fact, complete omission of the noun is not always the case in a Swahili sentence, as we can observe in example (4):

¹² Arabic loanwords like *safi* ‘pure, clean, honest’, *kamili* ‘complete, perfect’, *ghali* ‘expensive’, etc., do not carry any prefix (Bertoncini Zùbková 2009, 113).

(4) *M-toto hu-yu a-na-som-a Ki-swahili.*
 1-child DEM-1 3SG-PRS-study-FV 7-Swahili
 ‘This child studies Swahili.’

(4a) **Quest-o** *bambin-o studi-a swahili.*
 DEM-MSG child-MSG study-PRS.3SG swahili
 ‘This child studies Swahili.’

In sentence (4), it is clear that, similarly to the Italian equivalent sentence (4a), the grammatical function of *huyu* is *kivumishi kionyeshi* ‘demonstrative adjective’, ‘aggettivo dimostrativo’ rather than *kiwakilishi* ‘pronoun’, ‘pronome’. However, Massamba defines it as *kiwakilishi kionyeshi* ‘demonstrative pronoun’, and does not include the adjective having the function of *kivumishi kionyeshi* ‘demonstrative adjective’ in his linguistic dictionary (Massamba 2016, 57).

In Swahili, *kiwakilishi kionyeshi* ‘demonstrative pronoun’, ‘pronome dimostrativo’ often occurs in order to emphasize an element of the sentence, like *mtoto huyu* ‘this child’ in example (4) above or *yule mtoto* ‘that child’ in example (5) below. Thus, its function is similar to the Italian determinative article (see the Italian equivalent in example (5a)); in fact, the demonstrative is the only determiner that can precede a noun in a Swahili sentence, as seen in (5).

(5) **Yu-le** *m-toto w-angu a-na-it-w-a Juma.*
 1-DEM 1-child 1-POSS 3SG-PRS-call-PASS-FV Juma
 en **That** child of mine ***That** my child is called Juma.
 fr ***Le** mon enfant s’appelle Juma.

(5a) **Il** *mi-o bambin-o si chiam-a Juma.*
 ART POSS-MSG child-MSG REFL call-3SG Juma

it

(5b) ***Mi-o** *bambino si chiama Juma.*
 POSS-MSG child-MSG REFL call-3SG Juma

In example (5) *yule* ‘that’ precedes the noun, has the grammatical function of a determiner, and can be translated in Italian by the determinative article ‘il’, as in (5a), because it indicates a low degree of determination. Differently from Italian, which requires the article before a possessive (5a), other European languages such as French and English (see the equivalent translations of example (5)) do not allow a possessive to be preceded by a determinative article. The English sentence ‘*That my child is called Juma’ is ungrammatical, whereas the equivalent sentence ‘That child of mine is called Juma’ is acceptable because the possessive relations is expressed by a specifier ‘of mine’ following the noun.

In the Italian sentence in (5a), instead, the article ‘il’ is required before the possessive ‘mio’; indeed, if the article ‘il’ were omitted, (5b) would be ungrammatical.

Thus, when translating Swahili linguistic terms like *kivumishi* ‘adjective’ as ‘aggettivo’ and *kiwakilishi* ‘pronoun’ as ‘pronome’, it is necessary to take into account possible mismatches (i.e., conceptual vs functional correlations) between Swahili and Italian grammatical structures. As I have shown above, even though both Swahili and Italian distinguish the grammatical category of *kiwakilishi* ‘pronoun’, ‘pronome’ and *kivumishi* ‘adjective’, ‘aggettivo’ in their meta-language, these categories can have different functions in the two languages. In some contexts, Swahili demonstrative pronouns function like the Italian determinative article. In fact, Swahili uses the label *kiwakilishi* ‘pronoun’, ‘pronome’ to refer to possessives and demonstratives, which functionally behave as determiners of the noun and would be morphologically described in Italian as ‘adjectives’, ‘aggettivi’.

4 Synonyms and their use: translating linguistic terms on the basis of etymology

Some of the lemmas in the linguistic corpus seem conceptually to be synonyms. However, we should distinguish their use according to the context. There are several terms referring to the concept of “structure”, which is particularly important for Bantu morphosyntactic constructions. Moreover, the variety of terms used to refer to the notion of “object”, reflects the complexity of describing this grammatical concept in Swahili, as in other Bantu languages. In such cases, I have proposed a translation based on the etymology of these terms in order to differentiate their functions (Tramutoli 2018).

In fact, having recourse to the synchronic etymology is actually the best way to understand the real meaning of these words and their “cognitive function” as they constitute conceptual units of the linguistic system (Cabr  2010).

4.1 Terms referring to the concept of “structure”

The terms *muundo* ‘structure’ (and *nenonde* ‘derived word’), *uambajengo* ‘(syntactic) structure’ (cl. 7 *kiambajengo* ‘constituent’), and *tungo* ‘construction’ derive, respectively, from the verbal stems *-unda*, ‘construct’, *-jenga* ‘build’, and *-tunga* ‘string together’, which all belong to the semantic field of ‘construct’. Apparently, these lemmas are all synonyms of ‘structure, construction’, and a possible Italian translation could be ‘struttura, costruzione’; however, a deeper analysis of their etymologies and context of use is needed in order to disambiguate the meaning of these linguistic labels.

Both *muundo* ‘structure’ and *uambajengo* ‘(syntactic) structure’ are used in the syntactic context with the meaning of ‘structure’, ‘struttura’. In particular, *uambajengo* derives from the verb *-jenga* ‘construct’ and refers to the concept of ‘building a sentence’, often using a tree diagram. The term *viambajengo* (sg. *kiambajengo*) ‘constituents’ refers to the small units of the sentence which can be put together in order to build sentences. The abstract term *uambajengo* ‘structure’, in class 14, derived from the same verb *-jenga* ‘construct’, indicates a syntactic structure that allows all the constituents (*viambajengo*) to be unified.

The term *kiambajengo* ‘constituent’ should not be confused with *kirai* ‘phrase’, which is also used in syntactic analysis but refers to the function of a phrase in the sentence (Massamba, Kihore, and Hokororo 2001), such as *kirai-nomino* ‘noun phrase’, *kirai-kitenzi* ‘verb phrase’, and *kirai-kivumishi* ‘adjectival phrase’.

The term *tungo* ‘construction’, translated in Italian as ‘costruzione’, has a more general meaning since it is used in various fields beyond linguistics. It refers to the idea of building something following a specific order. It derives from the verb *-tunga*, lit. ‘string together; bring materials or ingredients together’, as in *-tunga ushanga* ‘string beads’ or *-tunga samaki* ‘string fish together’ (Mohamed 2011, 765). This term refers to all types of constructions (phonetic, morphological, and syntactic) in which several units are put together to create larger linguistic structures, the same way we string together stones or beads to ‘build a necklace’ (*-tunga ushanga*).

To give an example, *tungo-neno* ‘word construction’ is composed of several syllables (*silabi*), while *tungo-kishazi* ‘clause construction’ is composed of several phrases (*virai*).

Thus, *tungo* has a more generic meaning than the terms *kirai* ‘phrase’ and *kiambajengo* ‘constituent,’ which are commonly used in specific syntactic contexts.

The verb *-tunga* ‘compose’ also occurs in literary contexts with the sense of ‘compose, construct, arrange,’ such as in *-tunga shairi* ‘compose a poem,’ *-tunga wimbo* ‘compose a song,’ *-tunga kitabu* ‘write a book,’ and *-tunga hadithi* ‘compose a story’ (Mohamed 2011, 765).

The term *muundo* ‘structure’, (from the verb root *-unda* ‘construct’), translated into Italian as ‘struttura’, is conceptually similar to the terms *tungo* ‘costruzione’ and *uambajengo* ‘struttura (sintattica)’. The verb *-unda* ‘construct’ often occurs in syntactic descriptions and is used interchangeably with the verb *-tunga* ‘compose’ in expressions like *-unda sentensi* ‘construct a sentence’ or, in the description of linguistic rules, for example, *Kanuni muundo virai* ‘Phrase structure rules’:

Muundo wa viambajengo na kanuni zinazotawala muundo huu ili kuweza kuunda vipashio vikubwa zaidi katika daraja ya sentensi.

‘Structure of the constituents and rules which regulate this structure in order to construct bigger units in the system of a sentence’ (Mohamed 2010b).

The term *neno unde* ‘derived word’, like *muundo* ‘structure’, derives from the verb *-unda* and recalls the idea of ‘construct, assemble’. It has different connotations, referring to coined or derived words. However, the use of this term is not restricted to linguistics since it also occurs in other contexts, such as literature. For instance, the term *umuundo*, referring to the theory of structuralism, derives from the same verb stem *-unda* ‘construct, make, assemble’. In linguistics, the term *umuundo* ‘structuralism’ is often used in discussions of syntax to describe the word order of the sentence. For instance, traditional Swahili grammars prefer the expression *sarufi muundo* lit. ‘structural grammar’ instead of the English loanword *sintaksia* ‘syntax’.

Thus, we may note that Swahili linguistics is rich in terminology using the metaphor of the “structure” within the metalanguage. This is not a coincidence in Bantu languages like Swahili, which are characterized by a morphological typology based on the act of “constructing” linguistic units (Castagneto 2014, 430).¹³

¹³ The study by Castagneto (2014) is based on the corpus of Swahili–Italian linguistic terminology collected by Tramutoli (2010).

4.2 Terms referring to “complement” and “object”

There are several Swahili linguistic terms referring to the concept of “complement”. The terms *kijalizo* (cl. 7) ‘core argument’ and *chagizo* (cl. 7) ‘adjunct’ both refer to the concept of “complement” of the verb, and their meaning recalls the idea of “completing, integrating, filling” (the verb). I have analyzed and translated these terms, respectively, as ‘complemento nucleare’ and ‘complemento extra-nucleare’, considering their etymology and their use. The term *kijalizo* (cl. 7) derives from the verb *-jaliza* ‘fill up, add more’, from the verb stem *-jaa* ‘become full, be full’. In traditional grammars, *kijalizo* indicates a constituent of the sentence that has the function of completing the meaning of the verb (Massamba 2016, 49), as in examples (6) and (7):

(6) *Yeye a-me-ku-l-a ch-akula.*
S/he 3SG-PRF-INF-eat-FV 7-food
‘S/he has eaten **food**.’

(7) *Yeye a-me-pik-a ch-akula.*
S/he 3SG-PRF-cook-FV 7-food
‘S/he has cooked **food**.’

In these examples, the verbs *kula* ‘eat’ and *-pika* ‘cook’ are completed by the complement *chakula* ‘food’, which specifies the meaning of the verbs. Similarly, in examples (8) and (9) below, the meanings of the verbs *-weka* ‘put’ and *kula* ‘eat’ are specified by the complement *mezani* ‘on the table’; however, it is worth noting that, differently from (8), in (9) the complement *mezani* ‘at the table’ is not compulsory in order to give meaning to the sentence.

(8) *M-toto a-me-wek-a ki-tabu meza-ni.*
1-child 3SG-PRF-put-FV 7-book 9.table-LOC
‘S/he has put food **on the table**.’

(9) *M-toto a-me-ku-l-a ch-akula meza-ni.*
1-child 3SG-PRF-INF-cook-FV 7-food 9.table-LOC
‘A child has eaten food **at the table**.’

In these two examples, the complement *mezani* has two different functions. In sentence 8, it behaves as *kijalizo* ‘core argument’, ‘complemento nucleare’ because the verb *ameweka* ‘s/he has put’ needs an argument in order to give meaning to the sentence.¹⁴

In sentence 9, by contrast, *mezani* ‘at the table’ is defined in some Swahili grammars as

¹⁴ I am very grateful to Prof. Giorgio Banti for his suggestions on the possible Italian translations of the terms *kijalizo* ‘complemento nucleare’ and *chagizo* ‘complemento extra nucleare.’

chagizo ‘adjunct’ ‘complemento extra nucleare/circostanziale’, that is, a constituent with adverbial function that is not required in order to give meaning to the sentence. The term *chagizo* derives from the verb *-agiza* ‘direct, instruct, give instructions’ (Mohamed 2011, 7), preceded by class 7 noun prefix *ch-*, which usually refers to inanimate objects.

Both *kijalizo* ‘core argument’ and *chagizo* ‘adjunct’ relate to the theoretical framework of verb valency. I thus distinguish core arguments from adjuncts (Tramutoli 2010, 42).

Even though it is conceptually similar to *chagizo* ‘adjunct’, the term *kielezi* ‘adverb’ is commonly used in general syntactic descriptions of sentence word order. Thus, I have translated it in Italian as ‘avverbio’ (Tramutoli 2018). The term *kielezi* ‘adverb’ derives from the verb *-eleza* ‘elucidate, describe, explain’, indicating the constituent that adds explanations about the meaning of the verb.

The terms *kijalizo* ‘core argument’, *chagizo* ‘adjunct’, and *kielezi* ‘adverb’ are all preceded by the noun class prefix *ki-* (cl. 7), indicating a concrete object, and they are semantically close, since they indicate the idea of “completing” the verb. However, while *kijalizo* ‘core argument’ and *chagizo* ‘adjunct’ refer to the theoretical framework of valency, *kielezi* ‘adverb’ refers to the grammatical function of the constituent within the sentence. Considering the different shades of meanings of these terms, I have translated *kijalizo* ‘core argument’ and *chagizo* ‘adjunct’, respectively, as ‘complemento nucleare’ and ‘complemento extra nucleare’, because these terms explicitly refer to the idea of completing the verb, indicating the relationship between these elements and the core structure of the verb (‘core’, ‘nucleo’). I have translated *kielezi* ‘adverb’ as ‘avverbio’ because this term refers to the syntactic function of the element adding explanations to a verb, adjective, or another adverb within the sentence (Massamba 2016, 45). The noun *kielezi* derives, in fact, from the verb *-eleza* ‘explain, elucidate’. However, even among Swahili linguists there is some confusion about the use of the terms *chagizo* and *kielezi*, which are very close in meaning. There is agreement that in secondary schools the preferred term in the context of syntax classes is *chagizo* ‘adjunct’.¹⁵

Furthermore, the Swahili–Italian linguistic glossary contains several terms expressing the concept of “object”. In traditional Swahili grammar, the object is called *shamirisho*, derived from the verb *-shamirisha*, lit. ‘load a gun; put together’ (Mohamed 2011, 677), with a translated sense of ‘fill, complete’. This is etymologically close to the terms *kijalizo* ‘core argument’, ‘complemento nucleare’ and *chagizo* ‘adjunct’, ‘complemento extra-nucleare’, having the function of “completing, filling” the meaning of the verb. In particular, the term *shamirisho* refers to the direct object ‘complemento oggetto’ completing the transitive verb, that is, *nomino ya pili katika sentensi iliyo upande wa kiarifu ambayo huwakilisha mtendwa au yambwa* ‘the second noun in the predicate of a sentence that represents a patient or an object’ (BAKITA 2015, 924). A similar definition of *shamirisho* is *nomino ambayo inategemea na kirai-kitenzi, yaani nomino ambayo inafanya kazi ya kuelezea kitenzi* ‘a noun that depends on the verb phrase, that is, a noun having the function of explaining the meaning of the verb’ (Mohamed 2010b). In traditional Swahili grammar, *shamirisho* is defined as ‘part of the predicate (*kiarifu*) following the main verb’ (Massamba, Kihore, and Hokororo 2001) (see (10)).

¹⁵ Dr. A. Mnenuka, Assistant Lecturer at the University of Dar es Salaam, oral communication to the author, 2010.

(10) *Maganga a-na-lim-a shamba.*

Maganga 3SG-PRS-cultivate-FV 5field

kiima kiarifu

‘Maganga cultivates **the field.**’

Maganga: kiima (subject)

analima: kitenzi (verb)

shamba: shamirisho (direct object)

From the same verb stem, *-shamirisha*, derive the terms *kitenzi shamiri* ‘transitive verb’ and *kitenzi sishamiri* ‘intransitive verb’, even though the synonyms *kitenzi elekezi* and *kitenzi sielekezi* are more common terms.

While *kijalizo* indicates the core argument of the verb, the term *shamirisho* indicates the complement that is necessary for the sentence to be semantically and grammatically complete. I proposed to translate *shamirisho* as ‘direct object’, ‘complemento oggetto’ because in traditional grammar this Italian label corresponds to the direct complement which is part of the predicate and follows the main verb.

The concepts expressed by *shamirisho* ‘direct object’, ‘complemento oggetto’ and *kijalizo* ‘core argument’, ‘complemento nucleare’ are linked, since *shamirisho* often refers to a complement with the function of object, and is thus a type of *kijalizo* ‘core argument’, ‘complemento nucleare’.

However, translating *shamirisho* in Italian as ‘complemento oggetto’ could be misleading, according to traditional grammars.

Consider, for instance, examples (11) and (12):

(11) *Wa-na-pend-a ku-la.*

3PL-PRS-love-FV INF-eat

(shamirisho)

‘They love **eating.**’

(12) *A-na-pend-a m-toto w-ake a-end-e shule.*

3SG-PRS-love-FV 1-child 1-POSS 3SG-go-SBJV 9.school

(shamirisho)

‘He wants **his/her child to go to school.**’

We notice that, in (11), *kula* ‘eating’ is the object of the verb *wanapenda* ‘they love’; similarly, in (12), the object is the subordinate clause *mtoto wake aende shule* ‘his/her child to go to school’. In (11) and (12), the term *shamirisho* refers respectively to a verb having the function

of a noun and to a subordinate clause.

The Italian translation of the term *shamirisho* ‘complemento oggetto’ refers to the concept of the direct object as part of the predicate, as different from *yambwa* ‘object’, ‘oggetto’ that is the substantive with the function of the object, which is often expressed in the verb in a Swahili sentence. The term *yambwa* is commonly used in modern grammar theories for the morpho-syntactic description of Swahili sentences. The etymology of this term is ambiguous, however. It probably derives from the verb *-amba* ‘tell’; passive *-ambiwa*; *-ambiwa* ‘to be told’, and refers to an object that is clearly expressed in the sentence (Tramutoli 2010, 46). In Swahili sentences, *yambwa* ‘object’, ‘oggetto’ is expressed as an object marker on the verb. In Swahili grammars for Italian L1 users, the object marker is indicated as ‘classificatore oggetto’ and it is often compulsory in constructions including an applicative verbal extension (Bertoncini Zùbková 2009). Thus, I proposed to translate *yambwa* ‘object’ using the Italian label ‘oggetto’ which has a broader meaning, in that it includes both the sense of ‘object marker’, ‘classificatore oggetto’, attached to the verb stem and the meaning of ‘object’ expressed by the correspondent substantive as part of the predicate (Tramutoli 2018).

Some types of Swahili sentences, with di-transitive verbs usually including prepositional extensions, require two types of *yambwa* ‘objects’, ‘oggetti’: *yambwa* ‘first object’, often indicating the beneficiary of the action and *yambiwa* or *yambwa ya pili* ‘second object’, the patient. These can be translated in Italian respectively as ‘primo oggetto’ and ‘secondo oggetto’. For instance, in sentences (13) and (14), with two objects, *yambwa* ‘first object’, ‘primo oggetto’ must necessarily be marked in the verb form:

(13) *Juma a-me-m-pelek-e-a mam-ake ch-akula.*
Juma 3SG-PRF-OBJ-bring-APPL-FV 9.mother-POSS 7-food

Lit. ‘*Juma has brought **her** food **to his** mother.’

(13a) **Juma le h-a port-at-o a su-a madr-e del cib-o.*
Juma DAT.FSG have-3SG bring-PTCP-SG to POSS-FSG mother-FSG PART food-MSG

Lit. ‘*Juma has brought **her** food **to his** mother.’

(14) *Wa-zazi wa-na-wa-som-esh-a wa-toto w-ao.*
2-parents 3PL-PRS-OBJ-study-CAUS-FV 2-child 2-POSS

Lit. ‘*The parents make **them** **their** children study.’

(14a) **I genitor-i li fann-o studi-are i loro figli.*
ART.MPL parent-MPL OBJ.MPL do-3PL study-INF ART.MPL POSS.PL children

Lit. ‘*The parents make **them** **their** children study.’

In (13) and (14), the morphemes *-m-* and *-wa-* as well as the respective first objects *mamake* ‘his mother’ and *watoto wao* ‘their children’ are defined by Swahili linguists as *yambwa*, or

the beneficiary of the action or the aim expressed by the verb. In his discussion of the different properties of *yambwa* ‘first object’ and *yambiwa* ‘second object’ with Swahili di-transitive verbs (e.g. *kupa* ‘to give something to somebody’), Schadeberg (1996, 67) remarks that on a syntactic level there is no difference between the two objects, but these two arguments of the verb have different semantic roles.

In contrast to the Swahili examples, a similar construction in written Italian would be ungrammatical or redundant (see the equivalent Italian sentences (13a) and (14 a)), even though sentences of this kind are commonly used in conversation, as in (15):

- (15) *Certo che lo conosc-o tu-o figli-o!*
 Of_course that OBJ.MSG know-1SG POSS-MSG child-MSG
 Lit. ‘*Of course, I know **him** your son!’

Thus, differently from *shamirisho* ‘direct object’, ‘complemento oggetto’, *yambwa* ‘object’ indicates a determinate object, expressed by the object marker in the verb stem, usually indicating the beneficiary of the action (animate), which in Italian constructions often corresponds to a clitic pronoun having an emphatic function (e.g. ‘lo’ ‘him’ in (15)).

The difference between *shamirisho* ‘direct object’, ‘complemento oggetto’ and *yambwa* ‘object’, ‘oggetto’ is even more evident if we compare Swahili sentences like (16) and (17):

- (16) *Juma a-na-pend-a ku-imb-a.*
 Juma 3SG-PRS-love-FV INF-sing-FV
 ‘Juma likes **singing**.’

- (17) *Juma a-na-m-pend-a Rukia.*
 Juma 3SG-PRS-OBJ-love-FV Rukia
 ‘Juma loves **her, Rukia**.’

In (16), the verb *kuimba* ‘singing’ indicates a generic action and is thus not marked by any object (*yambwa*) infixed in the verb form. In contrast, in (17) the beneficiary of the action (*Rukia*, animate) is obligatorily marked on the verb by the object marker *-m-* (*yambwa*).

Swahili verbs requiring two objects are referred to as *vitenzi yambwa mbili* (sg. *kitenzi yambwa mbili*), ‘di-transitive verbs’ as in (18):

- (18) *Mw-izi a-li-m-nyang’any-a m-toto begi l-ake.*
 1-thief 3SG-PST-OBJ-rob-FV 1-child 5.bag 5-POSS
 yambwa *yambwa* *yambiwa*
 Lit. ‘*A thief stole **him child’s bag**.’

(18a)	<i>* Un</i>	<i>ladr-o</i>	<i>gli</i>	<i>h-a</i>	<i>rub-at-o</i>
	ART.MSG	thief-MSG	DAT.MSG	have-3SG	rob-PTCP-SG
	<i>la</i>	<i>bors-a</i>	<i>al</i>	<i>bambin-o.</i>	
	ART.FSG	bag-FSG	to	child-MSG	
Lit.	‘*A thief stole him child’s bag. ’				

(18b)	<i>Un</i>	<i>ladr-o</i>	<i>h-a</i>	<i>rub-at-o</i>
	ART.MSG	thief-MSG	have-3SG	rob-PTCP-SG
	<i>la</i>	<i>bors-a</i>	<i>al</i>	<i>bambin-o.</i>
	ART.FSG	bag-FSG	to	child-MSG
Lit.	‘A thief stole child’s bag. ’			

In sentence 18, there are two objects: *yambwa* ‘first object’, ‘primo oggetto’, that is, *mtoto* ‘child’, and *yambiwa* ‘second object’, ‘secondo oggetto’, that is, *begi lake* ‘his/her bag’. Unlike the Italian construction (18b), in the Swahili sentence in (18), as in other Bantu languages, *mtoto* ‘child’, the animate object, is promoted to the position of *yambwa* ‘first object’ immediately after the verb and followed by *yambiwa* ‘second object’, that is, *begi lake* ‘his/her bag’. The ‘first object’ ‘primo oggetto’ in (18) is *mtoto* ‘child’ (animate) with the related object marker *-m-*, which corresponds to the Italian dative case ‘al bambino’ ‘lit. ‘to the child’ with the related clitic pronoun ‘gli’. Differently from the Swahili sentence, in the Italian equivalent example in (18a), the beneficiary of the action, ‘bambino’, does not immediately follow the verb and does not need to be marked by the clitic pronoun ‘gli’, since it is already expressed in the predicate (see (18a) vs (18b)).

In Swahili, as in other Bantu languages, the construction of di-transitive verbs and the function of the object involves several criteria that influence object promotion (e.g., alienability and animacy). A study on experiential constructions in Haya, a Bantu language, for instance, has shown how in these Bantu languages, possessor promotion “transforms the possessor into a direct object if the verb is transitive” (Hyman 1996, 868). In Romance languages like Italian or French, there is, instead, an overt possessive marker situation, that is, the indirect or dative clitic pronoun (e.g. *mi*), as in the Italian sentence *Mi ha rotto il braccio* ‘S/he broke my arm’, similar to the French sentence *Il m’a cassé le bras* (Hyman 1996, 865).

The variety of terms used for describing the concepts of “complement” and “object” in Swahili (e.g. *shamirisho* ‘direct object’, ‘complemento oggetto’, vs. *yambwa* ‘first object’, ‘primo oggetto’ and *yambiwa* ‘second object’, ‘secondo oggetto’) reflects the complexity of this morpho-syntactic structure and constitutes a challenge for the translation of these metalinguistic terms.

5 Conclusion

In this article, I have shown how the complexity of Bantu morpho-syntactic structure is encoded in its metalinguistic representation. The translation of linguistic terminology has a cognitive function, since linguistic terms represent nodes of knowledge leading us to discover different linguistic representations.

Indeed, through the process of translation, this comparative analysis allowed us to explore the differences and similarities between the concepts expressed by linguistic terminology in Italian (as well as other genetically related languages) and Swahili. For instance, lemmas such as *u-tendea* ‘applicative extension’, ‘estensione applicativa’ and *u-tendwa* ‘passive extension’, ‘estensione passiva’ belong to class 14 since they indicate abstract morpho-syntactic concepts, and they have been translated using a multi-word Italian expression similar to English. For some terms, the Italian translation is defective, however, since it is inadequate to convey the grammatical function and nuances of the Swahili equivalent (e.g. *kivumishi* ‘adjective’, ‘aggettivo’). Furthermore, as observed above, Swahili uses several synonyms to describe the concept of “structure”, and I proposed a translation based on their etymologies, such as *uambajengo*, ‘syntactic structure’, ‘struttura (sintattica)’ (in a vertical dimension) vs *tungo* ‘construction’, ‘costruzione’ (in a horizontal order), (Tramutoli 2018). As I have shown, having recourse to the synchronic etymology can help the translator in finding strategies for differentiating semantic connotations, while, on the other hand, reflecting on terms’ formation is the best way to understand and describe the real meaning of these terms which represent different metalinguistic systems. Finally, I have noted that Swahili has specific linguistic terminology to distinguish the concept of “object marker”, as an affix referring to animates (*yambwa* ‘object’, ‘oggetto’), and as the complement of the verb which is part of the predicate (*shamirisho* ‘direct object’, ‘complemento oggetto’).

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APPENDIX 1. Linguistic terms

SWAHILI	ENGLISH	ITALIAN
<i>-a kisarufi</i>	grammatical	grammaticale
<i>-a pekee</i>	reflexive	riflessivo
<i>-agiza</i>	give instructions	dare istruzioni
<i>-ambisha</i>	affix	aggiungere affissi
<i>asili</i>	simple	semplice
<i>-badili</i>	substitute	sostituire
<i>chagizo</i>	adjunct	complemento extra-nucleare, circostanziale
<i>elekezi</i>	transitive	transitivo
<i>-eleza</i>	elucidate, explain	chiarire, dare spiegazioni
<i>fonimu</i>	phoneme	fonema
<i>fonolojia</i>	phonology	fonologia
<i>idadi</i>	quantity	quantità
<i>-jaliza</i>	fill up, add more	riempire, aggiungere
<i>-jenga</i>	build	costruire
<i>kiambajengo</i>	constituent	costituente
<i>kiambishi</i>	affix	affisso
<i>kiarifu</i>	predicate	predicato
<i>kibadala</i>	substitute, pronoun	sostituto, pronome
<i>kielezi</i>	adverb	avverbio
<i>kiima</i>	subject	soggetto
<i>kijalizo</i>	core argument	complemento nucleare
<i>kionyeshi</i>	demonstrative	dimostrativo
<i>kirai</i>	phrase	sintagma
<i>kisarufi</i>	grammatical	grammaticale
<i>kishazi</i>	clause	proposizione
<i>kitenzi</i>	verb	verbo
<i>kiulizi</i>	interrogative	interrogativo
<i>kiundaji</i>	derivational suffix	suffisso derivazionale
<i>kivumishi</i>	adjective	aggettivo
<i>kiwakilishi</i>	pronoun	pronome
<i>mofimu</i>	morpheme	morfema
<i>mofolojia</i>	morphology	morfologia
<i>muundo</i>	structure	struttura
<i>neni</i>	word	parola
<i>nomino</i>	noun	nome

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<i>-nyambua</i>	derive	derivare
<i>nyambulishi</i>	derivational	derivazionale
<i>-patanisha</i>	bring to agreement	accordare
<i>-rejea</i>	refer, return	riferirsi, ritornare
<i>sarufi</i>	grammar	grammatica
<i>sentensi</i>	sentence	frase
<i>shamiri</i>	transitive	transitivo
<i>-shamirisha</i>	put together	mettere insieme
<i>shamirisho</i>	direct object	complemento oggetto/diretto
<i>sielekezi</i>	intransitive	intransitivo
<i>sifa</i>	quality	qualità
<i>sintaksia</i>	syntax	sintassi
<i>sishamiri</i>	intransitive	intransitivo
<i>-tunga</i>	string together	legare insieme, costruire
<i>tungo</i>	construction	costruzione
<i>uambajengo</i>	(syntactic) structure	struttura (sintattica)
<i>uambishaji</i>	affixation	affissazione
<i>ubadilifu</i>	reversive extension	estensione contraria
<i>ufungamanishi</i>	positional (stative) extension	estensione statica
<i>umuundo</i>	structuralism	strutturalismo
<i>-unda</i>	construct	costruire
<i>uundaji</i>	derivation	derivazione
<i>unde</i>	derived	derivato
<i>unyambulishaji</i>	derivation	derivazione
<i>upatanishi</i>	(grammatical) agreement	accordo (grammaticale)
<i>urejeshi</i>	relative (clause)	relativo (proposizione relativa)
<i>ushikanishi</i>	tentive (contactive) extension	estensione contattiva o tenace
<i>utendanishi</i>	reciprocal extension	estensione reciproca
<i>utendea</i>	applicative extension	estensione applicativa
<i>utendeka</i>	neuro-passive extension	estensione statica-potenziale
<i>utendeshi</i>	causative extension	estensione causativa
<i>utendwa</i>	passive extension	estensione passiva
<i>-vumisha</i>	spread the voice	spargere la voce
<i>-wakilisha</i>	represent	rappresentare
<i>yambiwa (yambwa ya pili)</i>	second object	secondo oggetto
<i>yambwa</i>	first object	primo oggetto

APPENDIX 2. List of abbreviations

1	class 1
1PL	first-person plural
1SG	first-person singular
2	class 2
2SG	second-person singular
3PL	third-person plural
3SG	third-person singular
5	class 5
6	class 6
7	class 7
9	class 9
APPL	applicative
ART	article
CAUS	causative
DAT	Dative
DEM	demonstrative
F	feminine
FV	final vowel
INF	infinitive
LOC	locative
M	masculine
PART	partitive
PASS	passive
PL	plural
POSS	possessive
PRF	perfect
PROG	progressive
PRS	present
PST	past
PTCP	participle
REFL	reflexive
REL	relative
SBJV	subjunctive
SG	singular