KISWAHILI RESEARCH IN COGNITIVE AND CULTURAL LINGUISTICS

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Cognitive linguistics studies have been developing since 1980s and represent one of the major frameworks of linguistic research. This article provides an overview of the limited number of studies on Kiswahili which have been conducted using this theoretical model, while outlining the advantages of this approach in various areas of research and multiple topics. It is also demonstrated that cognitive Linguistics approach has benefits for teaching Kiswahili as a foreign language.

Introduction

The framework of Cognitive Linguistics was initiated in early 1980s (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, Langacker 1987, 1991) and it has been developing since then in various directions providing one of the major linguistic models.[1] Although Cognitive Linguistics has been employed within the studies conducted on certain issues of the Swahili language (among others, Contini-Morava 1997, 2002, Kahumburu 2016, Kraska-Szlenk 2014, 2018a, 2018b,), until now, it has not gained much popularity and such studies are rather limited as to their number. The present contribution is meant to outline several important aspects of Cognitive Linguistics in order to point out some advantages of using it as a theoretical model which can be applicable to multiple research topics within Kiswahili studies. Some attention will also be paid to a recent model of Cultural Linguistics (Sharifian 2011, 2017) which couples the insights of a cognitive approach with a strong cultural background.

For the purpose of this article, I have decided to present major assumptions and tenets of Cognitive Linguistics in the form of "commitments" which have often been emphasized as important concerns for linguistic studies conducted within this framework. I have chosen four of such commitments, which I will discuss in turn and illustrate with sample research topics on Kiswahili. These are: the cognitive commitment, the semantic commitment, the language usage commitment and the socio-cultural commitment.

The Cognitive Commitment

The important assumption of Cognitive Linguistics is that language cannot be separated from other human faculties and is integrated with general cognition. The cognitive commitment infers that the study of language processing is closely connected to such studies as neuroscience or psychology, but it also has consequences for examining linguistic structures *per se* which reflect *cognitive construals*, such as, *conceptual metaphor* and *metonymy*, and *cognitive universals*, such as

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tendencies in conceptualization patterns. I will illustrate these issues with examples of linguistic structures in Kiswahili.

As pointed out by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) in their pivotal work, using metaphor in conceptualization of notions through other notions is a feature of human mind, reflected in the everyday language we speak. Although people have direct ways of experiencing the environment, it is important to observe that "what the metaphoric structuring adds is our ability to model, extend, express and understand the subjective experiences which we are consciously aware of" (Evans 2004: 32-33). Metaphoric structuring is particularly invited in the case of abstract concepts which are not perceptually tangible, such as, for example, the time. In Kiswahili, but also in numerous other languages of the world, linguistic expressions of time often coincide with those referring to spatial relations. This is due to the fact that the concept of time, which cannot be directly experienced through our bodies and senses, is mentally structured through a more concrete concept of space. In the Cognitive Linguistics approach, this conceptualization pattern is captured by TIME IS SPACE metaphor (Evans 2004, Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 1999, Sweetser & Gaby 2017), found in many languages and illustrated below with the Kiswahili expressions.

As the first two examples in (1) demonstrate, the relative pronoun -po- can be used in reference to space, as in (1a), or in reference to time, as in (1b). The former structure is a basic one because the relative pronoun is congruent with the noun *mahali* 'place' of noun class 16 to which it refers. The uses represented by (1b) resulted from metaphorical mapping of spatial relations onto time relations presumably after structures of the (1a)-type were already in language usage. In the contemporary language, however, the temporal use of the pronoun -po- is fully conventionalized and no longer felt as "metaphorical", as it is typically the case in grammaticalization processes. More directly, TIME IS SPACE metaphor reveals itself in Swahili by the choice of lexical words used in reference to 'time'. The examples in (1c-d) show that modifiers typically used with spatial concepts may also be used with temporal concepts. The examples in (1e-f) provide evidence that the verbs of motion denoting movements of people or animals can likewise be used with the abstract 'time' conceptualized as a creature or an object moving towards or past the deictic centre.

(1)

a. [mahali] nili<u>po</u>kwenda
   '[the place] <u>where</u> I went'

b. [wakati] nili<u>po</u>kwenda
   '[the time] <u>when</u> I went'

c. njia ndefu/fupi
   'long/short road'

    d. muda mrefu/mfupi

     'long/short time'

    e. mtu amefika/amepita

     'a person arrived/passed by'

    f. wakati/muda umefika/umepita

     'time/period of time arrived/passed by

TIME IS SPACE metaphor can be considered as one of cognitive universals and its linguistic instantiations occur in most languages, although they may involve a range of slightly different mappings (Sweetser & Gaby 2017). Another example of universal cognitive mechanisms which come together with language-specific "parameters" is provided by conceptualization patterns based on the human body.

Bernd Heine observes that „the human body provides one of the most salient models for understanding, describing, and denoting concepts that are more difficult to understand, describe, and denote" (Heine 2014: 17). As argued by linguists and other researchers within the area of cognitive sciences, the reason for this universal tendency is motivated by the fact of the embodied, experiential basis of cognition and conceptualization (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 1999, Barsalou 2010, Casasanto 2017). Therefore, multiple languages provide similar paths of embodied metaphors and metonymies which extend the meaning from concrete "corporeal" senses onto various other notions. This pattern of universal conceptualization has been extensively examined using the source domain of terms denoting major parts of the human body which can be used in reference to (parts of) objects and abstract target domains, as illustrated by the following Kiswahili examples (Kraska-Szlenk 2014a, b, Talento 2014, Tramutoli 2021).

Analogical mapping based on the resemblance of an object to the shape or position of a specific body part can be seen in numerous expressions, as for example: *kichwa cha kebeji* 'head of cabbage', *kichwa cha kitabu/makala* 'head (i.e. the title or headline) of the book/article', *jicho la mtandao (wavu)* 'eye (mesh) of a net', *jicho la maji* 'spring' (of water), *uso wa nyumba* 'front (lit. face) of the house', *mdomo wa mto* 'mouth of the river', *moyo wa mti* 'core of the tree', *moyo wa jipu* 'core of abscess', *mkono wa mto* 'arm of the river', *mkono wa kiti* 'arm of the chair', *mkono wa ndizi* 'bunch (lit. hand) of bananas', *mguu wa meza* 'leg of the table'. A series of extensions along similar lines involves grammaticalization onto the target spatial domain, and from there, by the above-mentioned TIME IS SPACE metaphor, onto the temporal domain. Although these grammaticalization processes are extremely common cross-linguistically (Heine & Kuteva 2002), Kiswahili provides only a few examples, cf. *mkono wa kushoto/kulia* 'right/left side (lit. arm)', *siku za usoni* 'future' (lit. days of the face'), and the preposition *ndani* 'in, within' which historically developed from **nda* 'stomach' combined with the locative suffix *-ni*. Still other cases of abstract

domains in which the human body is used metaphorically are exemplified by such expressions as: *mkono wa serikali* 'hand/arm (i.e. the power) of the government', *jicho langu* 'my eye' (i.e. 'my beloved one'), *kwa moyo* 'by heart' or 'cordially', *kwa shingo upande* 'with the neck aside (i.e. unwillingly)', or *kula jasho (la mtu)* 'to exploit (someone)' lit. 'to eat (somebody's) sweat'.

Certain body parts are figuratively associated with emotions. In Kiswahili, it is predominantly *moyo* 'the heart' which serves this purpose, although other organs are also used to a lesser extent, cf. the conventionalized expressions, as for example, *moyo mweupe/mweusi* 'bright/dark heart', *moyo mkuu* 'big heart', *fundo la moyo* 'grudge, anger' (lit. big knot in the heart), *kukata maini* 'to hurt emotionally' (lit. to cut the liver), *kuchemka damu* 'to get angry/agitated' (lit. to boil blood). On the other hand, *kichwa* 'the head' is conceptualized as a metaphorical locus of intellectual processes and storage of thoughts, while *macho* 'the eyes' provide a channel for knowledge acquisition, in accordance with the widespread metaphor KNOWING IS SEEING (Sweetser 1990). The following examples illustrate: *mawazo kichwani* 'thoughts in the head', *kichwa kizito (kwa mawazo)* 'the head heavy (of thoughts), *jicho la kuchambua* 'an analytic eye', *kufumbua macho* 'to open the eyes' (i.e. to realize), *kuwa na macho* 'to be aware' (lit. to have the eyes).

Conceptualization patterns and semantic extensions are often based on another universal cognitive process, namely, that of metonymy, which links the source and the target within the same domain or within adjacent domains. Metonymy substitutes a more salient concept for a less salient one, as in the case of the synecdoche PART FOR WHOLE, CONTAINER FOR CONTAINED, or EFFECT FOR CAUSE, to mention a few typical examples. The process of metonymy is involved when a body part stands for a person, as in the case of portraying character traits, for example, *moyo mgumu* 'hard heart', *moyo wa bua* 'coward' (lit. heart of straw), which point to the domain of emotions by activating the 'heart' domain, while the expressions *kichwa kikubwa* 'arrogant person' (lit. big head), *kichwa kigumu* 'stubborn person' (lit. hard head), or *kichwamaji* 'madman, lunatic' (lit. watery head, head of water) activate the domain of the 'head' which stands for intellectual capacities. Strictly speaking, expressions of this kind rely not on one specific metonymy, but rather on a chain of joint metonymies, including, PART FOR WHOLE (or POSSESSED FOR POSSESSOR), because a person is designated and not the body part, and CONTAINER FOR CONTAINED, because the characteristic attributes are important and not their "location" (Kraska-Szlenk 2019).

In language usage metonymy interacts with metaphor: while the latter provides a general organizational schema, the former governs linguistic expressions which can be used in specific pragmatic contexts. For example, the uses of Kiswahili words as *tumbo* 'belly', *damu* 'blood' and *kidole* 'finger' in the examples in (2) can be judged as expressions of the metaphor KINSHIP

RELATION IS BODY (PART) SHARING. At the same time, they metonymically stand either for a kinship relationship, as in (2a) and (2b), or for a person being somebody's relative, as in (2c) and (2d)[2].

(2)

a. ndugu zake wa tumbo moja

'his/her sisters/brothers' (lit. his/her relatives of one belly)

b. nyie ni watu wa damu moja kwa hiyo itakuwa rahisi kwenu kuelewana

'You (pl.) are one blood, so it will be easy for you to understand each other'

c. Nakwambia kweli, rafiki yangu Mupangile, mimi siwezi kuisaliti damu yangu.

'I am telling you, Mupangile, my friend, I cannot forsake my [own] blood.'

d. (Mkono) wa kuume haukati (mkono) wa kushoto.

'The right hand does not cut off the left one.'

Conceptualization patterns *via* various body parts illustrated above for Kiswahili find numerous parallels in other languages (cf. Sharifian *et al.* 2008, Maalej & Yu 2011, Brenzinger & Kraska-Szlenk 2014, Kraska-Szlenk 2020, among others); therefore, they can be judged as universal cognitive strategies, although with language-specific instantiations. For example, not the heart, but other internal organs can be conceptualized as metaphorical containers for emotions, or, the ears instead of the eyes can provide a metaphorical channel of acquiring knowledge, or, one instead of two different body parts can serve as a metaphorical locus of reason and emotions simultaneously.

The Semantic Commitment

The central tenets of Cognitive Linguistics are quite different from those of the structuralist and generative approaches and focus on functional aspects of language. The idea that "[l]anguage is shaped and constrained by the functions it serves" (Langacker 2013: 7) underlies Cognitive Linguistics' research questions and applied methodologies. It is assumed that all language structures are meaningful and this idea posits semantics in the centre of research as this is the subfield of linguistics which deals with the meaning *per se*. It should also be noted that while other areas of linguistic studies can be explored individually, their status is not as autonomous as in more formal approaches. Also, the boundaries, such as those between semantics and pragmatics, phonology and phonetics, syntax and morphology, synchronic and diachronic phenomena etc., do not have to be strictly pronounced.

If the focus goes onto meaning, a natural question arises, how the meaning is organized in words and in other linguistic categories? In Cognitive Linguistics, categorization is based on the notion

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[2] The examples (2a-c) come from the Helsinki Corpus of Swahili and (2d) is a proverb. More discussion of this metaphor in Kiswahili and examples with other body part terms can be found in Kraska-Szlenk 2014b.

of 'prototype' and a category is flexible and organized in the form of a network. This is very different from rigid, binary categories, in which all members are assumed to share some common features. A prototypical category has a core (or, a centre) and a periphery. Not all category members have to share all attributes, but certain attributes co-occur within a category in a family resemblance fashion. Because of its flexibility, this way of organization is much more realistic and economical: we do not need to invent a new word each time the meaning is slightly modified, we can use the existing word and extend it to be used in a new context. This way of category organization is extremely useful and efficient in analysing the lexicon and polysemy, because we can link all different senses of the word through cognitive processes which are responsible for their contextual modifications. Naturally, some of the word's senses are more conventionalized and more frequently used than others; they constitute a core of a lexical category, while other senses are situated at periphery and arise sporadically or even *ad hoc* as novel interpretations. Dictionaries usually provide only major senses of the word without indicating their semantic interrelations. For example, *Kamusi Kuu ya Kiswahili* (BAKITA 2015), the largest monolingual dictionary of Kiswahili of over 1200 pages, includes only four meanings of *kichwa* 'head', as shown in (3).

(3)

Dictionary entries for *kichwa* (BAKITA 2015: 427)

kichwa₁: sehemu ya juu ya mwili wa binadamu au mnyama […]

'the upper part of the human's or animal's body […]'

kichwa₂: injini ya gari moshi […]

'the engine of the train'

kichwa₃: maandishi ambayo huandikwa juu ya kitabu, sura […]

'the text written in the upper part of the book, chapter […]'

kichwa₄: mtu aliyepewa jukumu la kuongoza wengine katika familia, kikundi cha watu au jamii

'a person who is given a responsibility of leading others in the family, a group of people or a society'

In a Cognitive Linguistics approach, all four senses distinguished in (3) are not entirely independent one from another. The core meaning from which all other derive is that of *kichwa₁*. A common feature linking this sense with *kichwa₂*, as well as *kichwa₄,* is the notion of importance; as the 'head' metaphorically controls the body, the engine plays the same role in the train; likewise, the leader guides a community of people. The abstract notion of 'importance' is closely connected to the upper position (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 1999). This is a cardinal position of the head, mostly encountered in our experience (i.e. while standing, sitting or walking), and this image lies behind various semantic extensions, including *kichwa₃*. At the same time, some conceptualizations of the

'head' are based on the spatial schema of 'front', as well, leading to such extensions as 'first', 'initial' or 'before' (Heine & Kuteva 2002, Kraska-Szlenk 2019). This schema has two sources: the first one being the human body in which the head is slightly protruded forward, while the other is provided by the bodies of most animals (mammals, birds, snakes, etc.) with the head situated in front. We can see this schema as an additional factor in the meaning of *kichwa₂*. Similarly, a number of other senses of *kichwa*, not included in the abovementioned dictionary, can be distinguished and analysed in Cognitive Linguistics framework showing their interdependence within a complex network (Kraska-Szlenk 2014a). The examples include: upper/top parts of objects or plants (*kichwa cha mlingoti* 'top of a pole', *kichwa cha mlima* 'top of the mountain', *vichwa vya mpunga* 'heads of rice'), round objects (*kichwa cha kabichi* 'head of cabbage', *kichwa cha vitunguu* 'head of onion'), as well as extensions associated with the 'head' as a metaphoric 'container for thoughts/intelligence, already mentioned above. It can be seen from these examples that a lexical category organized as a network does not require that all members share a set of features. There is nothing in common between the sense of *kichwa* in the construction *kichwa cha kabichi* 'head of cabbage' and the sense of being 'smart' expressed as *ana kichwa* lit. '(s)he has head'. Still, these completely autonomous senses are indirectly linked together, since they both relate to the basic sense of the lexeme.

Polysemy is a natural state of affair in language and other words are analysed as networks of connected meanings, too. One more Kiswahili example is shown in a sketchy diagram in (4).

The basic sense of the word *baba* is that of 'male parent' and is situated in the centre of this lexical category. A few other peripheral senses are shown in the diagram as extensions from this prototypical meaning by cognitive processes. For example, when we say *baba* to an older man, we metaphorically frame him as our father, but when we use an affectionate address *baba* to a son, the extension is based on a metonymy which links the two asymmetrical senses of the kinship dyad (father-son) within one conceptual domain. But when this strategy of affectionate address is further extended and used to an unrelated child, there is a metaphor at work, too, because the child is framed as our own. While in this particular example we can find a set of shared attributes between all senses of *baba* (i.e. male, human), it is not always possible when other kinship terms in Kiswahili are considered. The most striking case is that of *babu* with the basic meaning of 'grandfather'. While this term can be extended in an honorific or affectionate way similarly to the case of *baba*, it can also be used by some speakers as a more general word of endearment, for example, to address one's wife. It can also be used in the "bleached" meaning, that is, as a discourse marker which no longer carries the function of an address term. Therefore, not a single common denominator can be distinguished for all meanings of *babu*[3].

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[3] Detailed analyses of Kiswahili networks of kinship terms used as address can be found in Kraska-Szlenk 2018a, b.

(4) Polysemy of *baba*
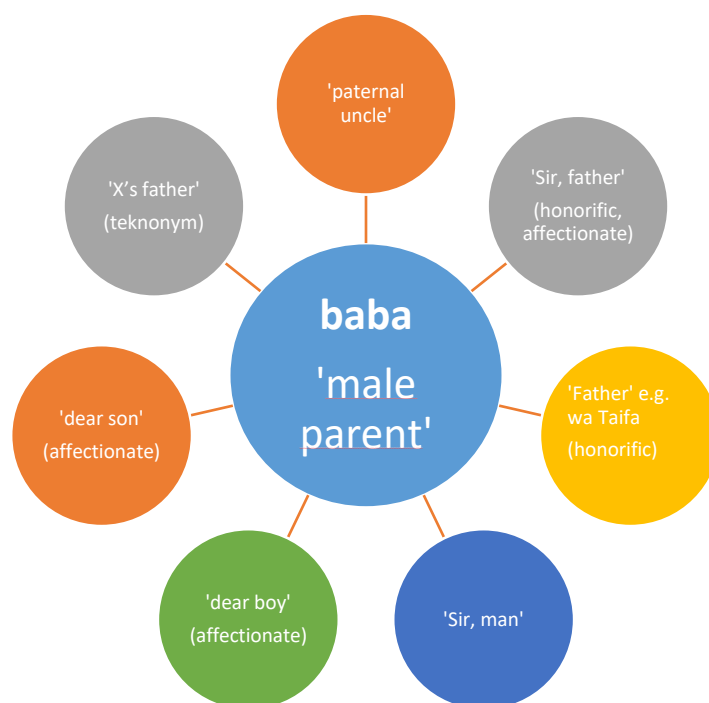
Apart from the lexicon, grammatical categories are also insightfully analysed as networks, as proposed by Contini-Morava (1997, 2002) for Kiswahili noun classes. As this author observes, "[t]he advantage of this type of analysis is its recognition of metaphor and metonymy as regular principles of semantic extension: cases that would have to be regarded as counterexamples to a traditional abstract-meaning analysis [….] can be explained by these principles" (Contini-Morava 2002: 5). For example, the membership of several "exceptional" nouns in class 3/4 is explained as follows: "a spear resembles a plant in that it is long and thin (metaphor), and it is also made of wood (metonymy); a metal chain is likewise long and thin (metaphor); a town is an assemblage of people that can figuratively grow and reproduce (metonymy and metaphor)" (Contini-Morava 2002: 5).

The Language Usage Commitment

Cognitive Linguistics is by assumption *usage-based* and thus recognizes the component of language which was largely ignored in structuralist and generative traditions and which roughly corresponds to Saussurean *parole* and Chomskyan *performance*. Instead of formulating grammatical *rules* at a highly abstract level, linguistic constructions are analysed in their immediate context of use and only then may be subjected toward further generalizations in a bottom-up

direction. The focus on usage also implies that frequency criteria are seriously taken into account since various linguistic phenomena are frequency sensitive. For example, high frequency words tend to become more polysemous than low frequency words and exhibit resistance to analogical levelling. They also tend to reduce their phonological form. In this section, I will demonstrate how taking the frequency factor into account helps to understand different aspects of Kiswahili grammar and usage.

Cognitive Linguistics relies on corpus studies which provide appropriate tools and quantitative measures for investigating large corpora of texts and for estimating various types of frequency. Among its many applications, corpus methodologies can be used to determine how strong conceptualization patterns are. Many languages share the same conceptualizations, but they may differ in that the same pattern may have a strong entrenchment in one language, but may be weakly represented in another. Strong entrenchment means that many linguistic instantiations of a specific conceptualization are found in a language and that they have high frequency of use; as a consequence, they have strong impact on mental representation. This leads to frequent repetition of the existing expressions, but also to creativity in coining new linguistic structures reflecting a given conceptualization pattern. Using corpus methodologies, we can therefore determine which conceptualization patterns are particularly strong in Kiswahili in comparison to other languages in which they occur, too. I will illustrate this issue taking the embodied conceptualizations above as an example.

The corpus studies of *moyo* 'heart' demonstrate that the uses of this lexeme associated with courage and encouragement occur with relatively high frequency and in various conventionalized expressions, cf. *kupa(ji)pa moyo* 'to encourage' lit. 'to give (oneself) heart', *kutia moyo* 'encourage' lit. 'to put heart', *kupiga moyo konde* 'encourage', lit. 'to beat heart with a fist', *kuvunja moyo* 'to discourage' lit. 'to break heart', or *kufa moyo* 'to lose hope' lit. 'to die (with) heart'. This meaning leads to further, more abstract interpretations of *moyo* as 'incentive', 'stimuli, or 'enthusiasm', as in the expressions: *(kuwa na) moyo wa kupata elimu / kuendelea na kazi* '(to have) heart to get education / to continue the work', etc. Kiswahili significantly differs in this respect from English in which such uses are much rarer (cf. *to put heart (into something)* or *to lose heart*), or, even more, from a language like Polish in which they are extremely rare[4]. Consequently, the frequency criteria decide that in Kiswahili the constructions as, for example, *ana moyo (mkubwa)* 's/he has a (big) heart' or *hana moyo* 's/he has no heart', are ambiguous and need contextual cues in order to properly interpret *moyo* (e.g. as 'mercy', 'courage', 'enthusiasm'), while

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[4] In one corpus study (Kraska-Szlenk 2005b) based on nearly 800 occurrences of *moyo*, there have been found c. 14% of such uses, while in a corpus study of the respective lemma *serce* 'heart' in Polish based on c. 500 occurrences (Kraska-Szlenk, forthcoming), there was not a single occurrence of such use, although there exist conventional expressions of it.

similar phrases in Polish are understood without a context in the interpretation of 'positive emotions' (Kraska-Szlenk 2014a: 88-89).

Similar measures show that the Kiswahili *mkono* 'hand/arm' is strongly associated with 'giving' and abstract extensions from it, such as 'helping' and 'supporting', cf. the frequent expressions as *kuunga mkono* 'to support' lit. 'to join a hand', *ku(m)pa (mtu) mkono* 'to give a hand'. This strong entrenchment makes the idiomatic expression *mkono wa birika* 'hand/handle of the teapot', fig. 'miser, cheap person', fully transparent to a speaker of Kiswahili, because it falls within the conceptualization pattern of extending a hand while giving something out: the handle of the teapot is closely attached to the 'body' of the teapot, so it does not stretch out and "give out". By contrast, the language like Polish has more abstract extensions of the lexeme 'hand/arm' (*ręka*) based not on 'giving' but rather on 'taking'. Hence, the hand figuratively 'holds', 'keeps', 'rules', 'punishes', etc. (Kraska-Szlenk 2005a). In this context, a Polish learner of Kiswahili has no chance of guessing the meaning of the abovementioned idiom, because it is semantically too far from the associations of 'hand' in Polish.

High frequency and strong entrenchment of a given conceptualization enhances its further elaboration and extension. This has already been hinted at while discussing the previous examples in this section but it is perhaps even more striking in the following case of the conceptualizations associated with Kiswahili *jasho* 'sweat'. While many languages use the metaphor (HARD) WORK IS SWEATING, Kiswahili looks very exceptional with its further extensions of *jasho* 'sweat' which may metonymically stand for 'work' or even 'profit', as illustrated by the following examples excerpted from the contemporary literary texts (after Kraska-Szlenk 2014a: 197).

(5)

a. Mali yangu, jasho langu

   'my property, my sweat'

b. Nakula jasho langu

   'I eat my sweat (i.e. spend my own money)'

c. mke niliyemwoa kwa pesa za jasho langu

   'wife, whom I married with the money of my sweat'

d. Mjane hana haki ya kurithi mali [...] ingawa ni wazi kwamba mke ndiye mvuja jasho zaidi katika familia.

   'The widow does not have a right to inherit property [...] even though it is obvious that wife is the one who works harder (or: provides more, lit. pours more sweat) in the family.'

e. Wanawake wananyimwa matunda ya jasho lao hata katika sheria za Tanzania.

   'Women are denied fruit of their work (lit. sweat) even by the laws of Tanzania.'

The final part of this section will focus on another area of linguistic studies, that of phonological reduction, which constitutes one of the most typical effects triggered by frequency. In Kiswahili, as in other languages, words and morphemes of high frequency exhibit a stronger tendency to reduce their phonological form than those of medium and low frequencies (cf. Kraska-Szlenk 2010). This phenomenon often causes morphophonological alternations which look „exceptional" on the surface, but are in effect caused by reduction of high frequency forms. We can observe this kind of apparent exceptionality in Kiswahili looking at alternative forms of several grammatical morphemes, as exemplified in (6). The gliding of the *u* vowel of the infinitive prefix in (6a) and of the subject prefix in (6b) takes place before vowel-initial stem of the high frequency verb 'go', while the full vowel is regularly preserved in these contexts. The examples in (6c) illustrate the irregular deletion of the vowel in the second person negative form, but not in the morphologically homophonous form of class 3 which has much lower frequency. The (5d) examples demonstrate that the marker of the future tense which historically developed from the verb *taka* 'want' has the reduced, monosyllabic form in most forms with the exception of future relative forms of low frequency in which the disyllabic form is preserved[5].

(6)

a. kwenda   kuendelea
 'to go'   'to continue'

b. twende   tuendelee
 'let's go'   'let's continue'

c. (wewe) hukuanguka (mti) haukuanguka
 '(you sg.) did not fall' '(the tree) did not fall'

d. atakuja   (mtu) atakayekuja
 's/he will come'   '(the person) who will come'

The Socio-cultural Commitment

Cognitive linguists fully agree with the often-cited words of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o that "[la]nguage, any language, has a dual character: it is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture" (wa Thiong'o 1986: 13). And as the writer continues, "[l]anguage as culture is the collective memory bank of a people's experience in history. Culture is almost indistinguishable from the language that makes possible its genesis, growth, banking, articulation and indeed its transmission from one generation to the next" (*ibid*: 15).

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[5] Reductions of this kind are more advanced in non-standard varieties of Kiswahili, as well as in colloquial and fast speech (cf. Kraska-Szlenk 2010).

In Cognitive Linguistics, interdependencies between language and culture are referred to by various labels, such as, *cultural frames (scripts)*, *cultural models*, or *cultural conceptualizations*. The latter term, introduced by Farzad Sharifian in his model of Cultural Linguistics (Sharifian 2011, 2017), is particularly explanatory and convenient. It captures all kinds of schematized, cognitive construals (schemas, metaphors, metonymies, etc.) which are culturally motivated, conventionalized and reflected in linguistic structures, as illustrated by the diagram in (7). Experimental research demonstrates that linguistic expressions which reflect cultural conceptualizations entrench them through constant language usage and affect mental representations (e.g. Casasanto 2016, 2017). In this way, they do not only organize cultural cognition, but provide guidance for sociocultural and verbal behaviours.

(7) Cultural conceptualisations (after Sharifian 2017: 6)
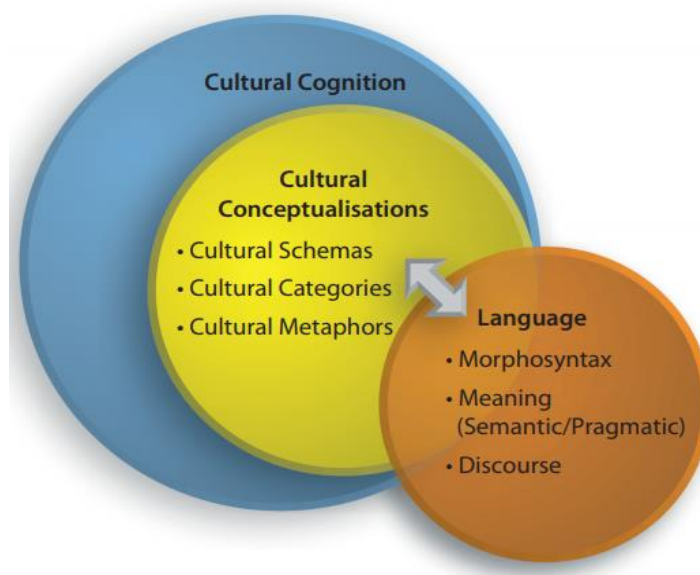
It can be argued that even though certain conceptualizations, as for example, those of the embodied character and judged as *universal*, are *culturally* determined at the same time, too, because they reflect the choices a particular language makes, especially if their frequency and entrenchment is taken into account, as argued in the previous section. We can therefore say that Kiswahili *cultural models* of 'heart', 'hand' or 'sweat' are different than those of English or Polish, although it would be hard to pinpoint any cultural motivation for these differences, apart from language history and contemporary usage. In other cases, however, we can attempt to look for such motivation, as in the examples discussed below.

Recall that kinship terms in Kiswahili are highly polysemous and may be used in various contexts with positive connotation (honorific or affectionate). It has been argued elsewhere (Kraska-Szlenk 2018a, b) that these multiple uses correlate with the high valuation of family in the Swahili society. This cultural motivation lies behind a custom of using kinship terms as polite or cordial address in their basic meanings, which are therefore already positively charged. For this reason, such terms become an adequate source domain for further metaphorical and metonymic extensions with even more positive axiological marking. The same social value of family motivates other conventionalized linguistic practices in various pragmatic contexts. For example, a negative response to a question about being married (or having children) typically includes the word *bado* '(not) yet', in accordance with socio-cultural expectations. It is also customary to ask about the wellbeing of family members while exchanging greetings.

While the above examples seek motivation in social values, the next one presumably relates to people's beliefs. Kahumburu (2016) observes that the conceptualization of anger and other negative emotions as an external entity is specific to Kiswahili and is not reported for other languages, cf. the expressions as: *kushikwa na hasira* 'to be caught by anger', *kuingiwa na hasira* 'to be entered by anger', *kupandwa na hasira* 'to be overwhelmed (lit. to be climbed) by anger'. It is likely that this conceptualization is rooted in the belief in possession by spirits which is referred to by similar linguistic expressions, cf. *kupandwa na pepo* 'to be possessed (lit. to be climbed) by a spirit', *kuingiwa na pepo* lit. 'to be entered by a spirit'. The explanation proposed here is supported by the fact that constructions of this type are used with negative emotions (*hasira* 'anger', *ghadhabu* 'anger', *wasiwasi* 'anxiety', *hofu* 'fear', *huzuni* 'sorrow', etc.) and only exceptionally with positive ones (*matumaini* 'hope'), as confirmed by the corpus data (Kahumburu 2016: 438). Similar conclusions are drawn by Tramutoli (2022) who observes that certain expressions referring to spirit possession may be used metaphorically in reference to anger, cf. *shetani amekupanda kichwani* 'the devil has climbed to your head' (Tramutoli 2022: 160), which may have a "literal" reading or may refer to being angry. To summarize, the Swahili conceptualization of anger and its linguistic instantiations are very much culture-dependent and differ from other languages in which more universal patterns are observed, for example, those triggered by commonly encountered metaphors, such as: ANGER IS A HOT FLUID IN THE CONTAINER or ANGER IS FIRE (e.g. Kövecses 2000).

Other examples of Swahili culture-specific conceptualizations are found in the domain of disease. Due to the contacts with the Arabic language and Middle Eastern cultures, Swahili has developed a range of cultural conceptualizations which relate to the humoral theory (Swartz 1997, Tramutoli 2020, 2022). Accordingly, an illness may result from imbalance (an excess or deficiency) of *matabia* 'humours' ('characters') which are associated with four elements, such as, cold/air, hot/fire, dry/earth, and wet/water, and which are linked to particular foods, as well as to

bodily organs and fluids. For example, an access of the dry element (*yabisi*) associated with the spleen and the bile may cause depression, but it may as well be responsible for an envious character trait. According to Tramutoli (2022: 158), the humoral theory lies behind such linguistic expressions, as for example, *kuwa na kinyongo* 'to resent' (lit. 'to have bile'), *kuwa na mtimanyongo* 'to feel resentment' (lit. 'to have a bile-heart'). Another source of cultural explanation of being unwell and, consequently, being subject to a medical treatment by *mganga* – the traditional healer, is the above-mentioned phenomenon of spirit possession (Tramutoli 2020, 2022). It comes as no surprise that the Kiswahili verb *kuumwa* 'to be hurt, ill' which can be used in reference to any kind of illness, may also be used in the case of a condition related to spirit possession, cf. *anaumwa pepo/shetani* 's/he is hurt by (ill of) a spirit/devil'.

Some cultural conceptualizations consist of complex cultural schemas associated with important values or norms of behaviour. Linguistically, they are reflected in speech acts rather than in linguistic expressions. The high values of *heshima* 'honour' and *sitara* 'concealment' motivate a style of speaking indirectly which is especially popular among women in the coastal Swahili culture. As Yahya-Othman comments: "[i]n using indirect address, the speaker conforms to what is considered appropriate in the avoidance of shame and embarrassment, and consequently enhances their own status within the community, which contributes to their positive face" (1994: 159)." The schema of indirect speech may include a range of pragmatic strategies, as for example, using metaphors, proverbs, *mafumbo* 'enigmas', *vijembe* 'innuendos', or addressing the non-existent "third party" (Yahya-Othman 1994, Vierke 2012, among others).

There are also cultural conceptualizations which are not part of everyday language usage, but are limited to the literary imagery, as in the case of *mnazi* 'coconut palm tree' being a metaphor of a beloved woman, especially a wife. The *mnazi*-metaphor can be traced to the oldest poetic tradition, as it is found in a poem attributed to the legendary heroes called Fumo Liongo, but it is still vivid on the Swahili Coast and in a sense „feeds" other tree-metaphors in Kiswahili. In one of the songs by Zein L'Abdin – the prominent poet and singer from Mombasa – *Mnazi* 'coconut palm tree' is understood as a wife (or perhaps the first wife) and is juxtaposed to *Mkoma* 'doum palm tree' which is a novel metaphor used by the poet to designate a lover (or perhaps a second wife). Another example is found in *Wimbo wa Miti* (Mbele 1996, Vierke 2007), where several trees stand for different character traits.

The final example in this section shows that a boundary between everyday language usage and literary imagery is not rigid. The metaphor of eating (especially fruit) in reference to having sex is well conventionalized in the Swahili pop culture. But it may penetrate as form of euphemism into people's communication. The following examples come from *Shangazi Sizarina*'s column of the

Kenyan newspaper *Taifa Leo*[6]. Notice in particular the joking creativity in (8d) being a response to (8c).

(8)

a. Nina mpenzi hajawahi kunipa tunda (R)

'I have a sweetheart [but] she has not given me fruit yet

b. Tukiwa pamoja hataki nionje asali (R)

'When we are together, she does not want me to try the honey'

c. kila nikitaka kula chapati, ananiambia wakati bado (R)

'Whenever I want to eat *chapati*, she tells me the time [has not come] yet'

d. Badala ya chapati labda ujaribu maandazi. Ama ungoje hadi meno yatakapomea ndipo ujaribu pia muhogo (S)

'Instead of *chapati*, perhaps try doughnuts. Or wait until [your] teeth grow and then try cassava, too'

Conclusion

Cognitive Linguistics with its different "commitments" provides a multi-faceted framework of analysing language structure and usage patterns in the full context of socio-cultural situatedness. I have argued that it can provide convenient tools for investigating a number of research problems in Kiswahili. It helps to analyse polysemous structure of lexical and grammatical categories in a "meaningful" way by constructing a network in which all members are related to each other but not all of them have to share common features. By recognizing language usage and frequency, Cognitive Linguistics can explain certain phenomena which look "exceptional" on the surface, as for example, some morphophonological alternations. A language-usage approach and corpus methodologies become very helpful in focusing on details of linguistic structures which make it possible to pinpoint characteristic features of one language in comparison with others, as has been shown by quality differences between conceptualization patterns in Kiswahili and some other languages. The assumption that language faculty is part of human cognition, which itself is grounded in physical embodiment and experience, provides an insightful way of analysing conceptualization patterns reflected in linguistic structures. Finally, Cognitive Linguistics consequently aims at investigating socio-cultural motivation behind language usage and structure.

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[6] The data has been collected from various issues of *Taifa Leo* between January and February 2012. The examples marked as (R) come from readers, while the one marked as (S) is the columnist' comment.

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