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## KINSHIP METAPHORS IN SWAHILI LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

### Abstract

Swahili kinship terms are highly polysemous and occur in many figurative meanings out of which some are fully conventionalized in language usage. The article focuses on a specific case of such extensions which metaphorically frames an unrelated person as one's kin. The usage patterns of this "fictive" kinship will be analyzed in various pragmatic contexts demonstrating their illocutionary and perlocutionary effects. In addition, it will be shown that this particular extension, as well as other multiple figurative uses of kinship terms correlate with the Swahili *cultural model* and the high appreciation of one's family in the community's system of values.

**Keywords:** cultural models, kinship terms, metaphor, polysemy, Swahili

### 1 | INTRODUCTION: CULTURAL MODELS IN LANGUAGE AND SOCIAL LIFE

In linguistic and anthropological studies, the idea that language and culture are interconnected and influence each other is not new in the Western thought. It goes as far back as the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the pioneers of scholarly research in this area, such as, among others, Wilhelm von Humboldt, Franz Boas, Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf, although it should be noted that their original ideas have been sometimes misinterpreted (cf. Sharifian 2017). It is only in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, that various aspects of the language-culture connection started to be supported by solid analytical and empirical evidence coming from linguists and anthropologists, but also by independent evidence brought to attention by a multidisciplinary paradigm of brain and cognitive studies. By now, language-culture interconnection has been thoroughly

researched in many domains including: general issues of categorization and conceptualization (e.g. Lakoff and Johnson 1980, Lakoff 1987, Sharifian 2011, Barsalou 2012, Casasanto 2016), emotions (e.g. Kövecses 2000, 2005, Enfield and Wierzbicka 2002), embodiment (e.g. Brenzinger and Kraska-Szlenk 2014, Kraska-Szlenk 2014a,b, Sharifian *et al.* 2008, Maalej and Yu 2011) and other topics (e.g. Holland and Quinn 1987, Palmer 1996, Wierzbicka 1997).

Cognitive linguistics, which provides a theoretical framework for this article, has always relied on the assumption that meaning can be examined only when taking into account the full context of use with all of its facets, including the culture of a speech community. This approach is also promoted in the latest research (cf. Dąbrowska 2016, Geeraerts 2016, Schmid 2016, and the references therein). In cognitive linguistics, interdependencies between language and culture are known, among other labels, as *cultural scripts*, *cultural models*, or *cultural conceptualizations*, and refer to a range of cognitive processes and construals, such as schemas, metaphors, metonymies, or categories, which prevail in a particular society and are reflected in language and socio-cultural behaviors. They organize cognition, being a model “of”, but they also provide guidance, being a model “for”. Cultural models are realized by means of social behaviors and through linguistic expressions which reflect them, entrench them through constant language usage and, according to experimental research (e.g. Casasanto 2016, 2017), affect mental representations. The more frequent a particular cultural model is in language usage, the greater its entrenchment and impact, especially if diversified linguistic structures reveal it through fixed expressions and creative uses. This means that the same cultural models can occur in different languages with smaller or greater “force”, as illustrated by the following examples.

The well-known metaphor from Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) pivotal study *TIME IS MONEY* is well-entrenched in American culture and has many linguistic correlates (e.g. *waste/save/cost/give time*), but occurs less frequently in other parts of the world, or is non-existent. The figurative *SOCIAL FACE* (understood as honor, prestige) has strong manifestations in Asian languages and cultures (Yu 2008, Ukosakul 2003), and weaker realizations in other languages (e.g. Swahili or English, Kraska-Szlenk

2014a, b). Two metonymies are typically associated with work: HAND(S) FOR WORK or SWEAT FOR WORK and some languages, like for example, Polish or Swahili, reveal both of them, but each to a different extent (Kraska-Szlenk 2014b: 68).

This article focuses on Swahili kinship terms which are extremely polysemous and have a very high frequency of use. I will argue that both of these features correlate with valuing family highly which in cognitive linguistics can be expressed by the propositional schema FAMILY IS GOOD (Kraska-Szlenk 2018). This schema seems to be quite universal. People all over the world respect a family as an institution and, as a community, associate kinship relations with closeness and positive axiological marking. However, as in the examples mentioned before, the schema FAMILY IS GOOD has different degrees of entrenchment in different cultures and languages. I will demonstrate in this article that in the Swahili speaking community, this schema governs social behaviors and attitudes which complies with a high appreciation of one's family in East African culture. It is also instantiated by numerous conventionalized expressions, as well as by vivid examples of novel language practices in cultural texts and in everyday usage. High polysemy and frequent use of kinship terms also represent part of the same cultural model. A rough sketch of polysemous uses of Swahili kinship terms is presented in section 2, followed by a discussion of family values in Swahili literary texts in section 3. It would be impossible to discuss all of the uses of polysemous kinship terms in one article. For the sake of space, I will focus here on one type of metaphoric use, also known as "fictive" kinship, analyzed in sections 4 and 5. The Conclusion closes the article.

## 2 | POLYSEMY OF SWAHILI KINSHIP TERMS

The repertoire of Swahili kinship terms is slightly richer than in English and includes terms denoting: members of the ascending generations, e.g. *mama* 'mother', *baba* 'father', *mjomba* 'maternal uncle', *shangazi* 'paternal aunt', *ami* 'paternal uncle', *bibi* 'grandmother', *babu* 'grandfather'; members of the descending generations, e.g. *mtoto* or *mwana* 'child', *binti* 'daughter', *mpwa* 'nephew/niece', *mjukuu* 'grandson/grand-

daughter’; members of the same generation, e.g. *dada* ‘elder sister’, *kaka* ‘elder brother’, *mdogo* ‘younger sister/brother’, *ndugu* ‘cousin/distant relation’; and affinal terms, e.g. *mke* ‘wife’, *mume* ‘husband’, *mkwe* ‘in-law’, *shemeji* ‘brother-in-law or ‘sister-in-law (of the opposite gender)’, *wifi* ‘husband’s sister or brother’s wife’.

In the Swahili-speaking community, consanguinal and affinal terms are frequently used as cordial and mildly honorific address forms (with or without the use of the possessive pronoun ‘my’). This practice is very common in the entire Swahili-speaking area and can be considered a respectful, unmarked manner of addressing one’s kin (Habwe 2010, Kraska-Szlenk 2009, Podobińska 1997, 2001). Depending on the context and habits within one’s family, addressing a family member with a term indicating real consanguinal or affinal ties may, but does not have to entail particular closeness or affection.

In addition to their use as address or referential forms in the contexts pointing to “true”, or “genealogical” relations, kinship terms are used in a number of other situations in various figurative meanings, out of which some are fully conventionalized and others are creatively constructed by language speakers. In this way, Swahili kinship terms are highly polysemous.

The polysemy of Swahili kinship terms is illustrated by the following short excerpt coming from a novel by G. Ruhumbika which contains as many as six different uses of the word *mama* which corresponds to English ‘mother’ in its prototypical basic meaning of the ‘female parent’<sup>1</sup>. The quoted words refer to a main character in the novel, at that time a girl of eleven years old, and are spoken by her mother in support of the girl’s wish to be recognized as a ‘mother’ to her newly born nephew. The baby’s mother – the girl’s beloved older sister – died while giving birth to him. In the excerpt, the first occurrence of the word *mama* is untranslatable into English, because it is intentionally constructed to carry a vague meaning of ‘mother/aunt’ relative, as explained in the subsequent context, where specific modifiers are used to disambiguate particular meanings of the

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<sup>1</sup> This is how the word is defined by the monolingual Swahili dictionary: *mzazi wa kike* ‘female parent’ (TUKI 2004: 219).

word: *mama yake mdogo* ‘aunt’ (lit. ‘her young/er mother’), *mama yake mzazi* ‘mother’ or ‘biological mother’ (lit. her parent mother), and *wa mama mmoja* ‘of one mother’. The next instance, *mama wa kujipandikiza* represents a creative use of the word with a literal meaning coming close to ‘self-ascribed mother’, which, however, used together with the adverb *tu* ‘only’ suggests a derogatory qualification of an ‘adopted mother’<sup>2</sup>. The final instance of *mama* represents an affective usage of this word, comparable to the English ‘young lady’.

- (1) Huyu binti yetu kwanza ni *mama* hasa wa huyu mtoto. Ni *mama* yake mdogo, mdogo wa *mama* yake mzazi, wa baba mmoja na *mama* mmoja. Siyo *mama* wa kujipandikiza tu. Halafu, kuhusu *mama* huyo nae kuwa mtoto mchanga, hapa nyumbani tutampa msaada wote atakaohitaji. (*Janga*, p. 45)

‘First of all, this daughter of ours is a real *relative* of this child. She is his *aunt*, a younger sister of her [own] birth *mother*, of one father and one *mother*. She is not only a self-ascribed *mother*. Then, as to this *young lady* being herself a small child, we here at home will offer her any kind of help she will need.’

Several conventionalized senses of the polysemous kinship term *mama* are shown in Table 1. The English glosses are approximate, because in some cases it is impossible to provide an exact translation which would reflect nuanced shades of the Swahili meaning. The last column indicates major features of a particular use of *mama* in a given context, but it should be noted that all kinship terms in their various uses are honorific to some extent, as well as familiar to some extent.

The first sense in Table 1 is the “basic” meaning (‘female parent’) from which all others are derived by adding a modifier (as in 2, 8 and optionally in 3), or semantically extend by means of a cognitive process, such as metaphor (3 and 4), metonymy (5), a combination of these two (6), or by further generalization (7). The use in 2 (the so-called *teknonym*) reflects a common practice of naming a woman by reference to her oldest child. The form in 3 is a conventionalized term for a mother’s

<sup>2</sup> The conventionalized term for ‘adopted mother’ in Swahili is *mama wa kambo*.

sister and can be specified as *mama mdogo* ‘aunt’ (mother’s younger sister) or *mama mkubwa* ‘aunt’ (mother’s older sister). The use in 4 reflects a metaphoric, also called “fictive”, extension of the kinship term on an unrelated person whom an addresser wants to frame as his/her ‘mother’. This particular extension will be the focus of the present article and will be further discussed in sections 3 and 4. The uses in 5 and 6 represent affectionate address inversion, when in particular circumstances a mother calls her daughter (5) or another girl (6) by the kinship term appropriate for herself. This use of kinship terms has been analyzed in detail in Kraska-Szlenk (2018). The use in 7 represents a case of generalization, when any adult woman can be addressed or referred to as *mama*. This form can be used with a woman’s name, too (as in 8), although in the case of professional women, the title *Bibi (Bi)* is preferred.

TABLE 1. Polysemy of *mama*

NO	SWAHILI TERM	TYPE	ENGLISH GLOSS	FEATURE
1	<i>mama</i>	basic	mother, mum	honorific
2	<i>mama X1</i>	teknonym	X’s mother	familiar
3	<i>mama</i> ( <i>mdogo/mkubwa</i> )	metaphoric familial	maternal aunt	honorific
4	<i>mama</i>	metaphoric non-familial	mother, Ma’am	honorific
5	<i>mama</i>	metonymic	dear (daughter)	affectionate
6	<i>mama</i>	metaphoric- metonymic	dear (child)	affectionate
7	<i>mama</i>	generalized	Ma’am, lady	honorific
8	<i>mama X</i>	other	Mrs. X	honorific

Table 2 contains a polysemous network of the mirror-imaged term *baba* ‘father’. While senses 1-6 are analogous to *mama*, differences between the two lexemes are noticeable in 7 and 8. The generalization of

*baba* in the direction of ‘adult man’ is not as common as in the case of *mama*, and the term *Bwana* ‘Sir, Mr.’ provides an unmarked strategy to address or to refer to a man in a polite way (cf. Beck 2003, Kraska-Szlenk 2018). On the other hand, the honorific title *Baba* in 8 (in reference to God, a political leader, etc.) does not have a female equivalent.

Other kinship terms also have various polysemous meanings, some parallel to those of *mama* and *baba* shown here, and some specifically associated with particular lexemes (cf. Kraska-Szlenk 2018). For the purpose of this paper, it is sufficient to say that practically all kinship terms can be used in the sense of 4, that is, when an unrelated person can be metaphorically framed as ‘kin’. This also includes the case of a person within one’s family who can be metaphorically leveled to a closer relationship, as for example, when a maternal uncle will be called *baba* instead of *mjomba*, or a paternal aunt will be addressed as *mama* instead of *shangazi*.

TABLE 2. Polysemy of *baba*

NO	SWAHILI TERM	TYPE	ENGLISH GLOSS	FEATURE
1	<i>baba</i>	basic	father, dad	honorific
2	<i>baba X</i> <sup>3</sup>	teknonym	X’s father	familiar
3	<i>baba</i> ( <i>mdogo/mkubwa</i> )	metaphoric familial	paternal uncle	honorific
4	<i>baba</i>	metaphoric non-familial	father, Sir	honorific
5	<i>baba</i>	metonymic	dear (son)	affectionate
6	<i>baba</i>	metaphoric-metonymic	dear (boy)	affectionate
7	<i>baba</i> (rare)	generalized	Sir (rare)	honorific
8	* <i>baba X, Baba</i>	other	Father	honorific

<sup>3</sup> In the Zanzibari variety of Swahili, teknonyms tend to occur with possessive pronoun -ake ‘his, her’, i.e. *mamake X, babake X*. Sometimes, the names of one’s other children are used rather than that of the oldest child.

### 3 | THE SCHEMA FAMILY IS GOOD IN SWAHILI CULTURAL TEXTS

Swahili culture, as many other African cultures, is known for its appreciation of family and social ties. Yahya-Othman comments “[k]eeping oneself to oneself’ is [...] something that one would try very hard to avoid” (1994: 145). In the same vein, Ndungo says: „Life is considered as incomplete unless one has a family [...] and social status is acquired through the institution of marriage” (2002: 66).

Numerous Swahili proverbs and clichés, whether in a direct or figurative manner, point to the importance of family, obligations toward one’s kin, and love of one’s kin. Several representative examples are included in (2) below<sup>4</sup>. While (2a-c) demonstrate universally understandable imagery, particularly interesting and very specific to the Swahili culture are the last three examples which build upon the metaphor KINSHIP RELATION IS BODY (PART) SHARING<sup>5</sup>: (2d) conveys the message that one should support and endure one’s family, (2e) – that one should not harm one’s family, and (2f) – that even a bad family member might be useful one day.

- (2) a. Damu nzito kuliko maji.  
‘Blood is thicker than water.’
- b. Mjukuu kwetu tunda.  
‘A grandchild at home is a fruit.’
- c. Kosa moja haliachi mke.  
‘One fault is not enough to leave a wife.’
- d. Kinaota ku jicho; kingeota ku pua, ningekitoshia.  
‘It grows in the eye, but if it grew on the nose, I would remove it.’
- e. (Mkono) wa kuume haukati (mkono) wa kushoto.  
‘The right hand does not cut off the left one.’

<sup>4</sup> All Swahili proverbs are cited after Scheven (1981).

<sup>5</sup> Discussion of this metaphor and more examples can be found in Kraska-Szlenk (2014c), which also includes the examples in (2d-f) and in (3).

- f. Kidole chako kibaya chaweza kufaa siku baya.  
 ‘Your bad finger can be of use on a bad day.’

The message of family values is expressed not only in conventionalized proverbs, but can frequently be observed in the form of creative uses in various kinds of texts. The examples in (3a-d), which are excerpted from modern Swahili novels and all stress a special bond between kin, illustrate the abovementioned metaphor in its specific application, namely, of sharing *damu* ‘blood’.

- (3) a. Nakwambia kweli, rafiki yangu Mupangile, mimi siwezi kuisali-  
 ti damu yangu. (*HCS*)  
 ‘I am telling you, Mupangile, my friend, I cannot forsake my  
 [own] blood.’
- b. Mali yake sharti itambae na damu yake (*HCS*)  
 ‘The wealth must go with his blood’
- c. nyie ni watu wa damu moja kwa hiyo itakuwa rahisi kwenu  
 kuelewana (*HCS*)  
 ‘you (pl.) are one blood, so it will be easy for you to understand  
 each other’
- d. Ni kitu cha kawaida kwa binadamu kupenda mazao ya damu  
 yake. (*Janga*: 46)  
 ‘It is normal for a human being to love the crops of his blood.’

The same message of a special bond within a family relationship is conveyed in example (4) which comes from a Swahili oral narrative collected in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Zanzibar. Here, a protagonist, who has just bought a young female slave to look after his daughter, uses a number of novel metaphors built on the source domain of kinship in order to frame a newly established relation between the caretaker and the girl. The framing is based on specific instantiations of the general metaphor A PERSON IS KIN in which consanguinal or affinal concepts like ‘mother’, ‘father’, ‘husband’, etc. provide source domains for metaphorical mapping on the target domain – a servant girl in this case. All these metaphors (i.e. A PERSON IS MOTHER, A PERSON IS FATHER, etc.) map an axiological structure

associated with kin relations: it is the positive value of love for one's kin which makes a person naturally obliged to take care of them.

- (4) Mimi nimekununua sababu ya mwanangu, umpikie chakula chema, umvike nguo njema, umtandikie kitanda chema, umzungumze mazungumzo mema, huyu ndiye mamayo, huyu ndiye babayo, huyu ndiye mumewo, huyu ndiye shogayo, huyu ndiye mwanao. Basi, tafathali mtunze sana mtoto. (*Sultan Darai*, p. 38n.)  
 'I have bought you because of my child, that you may cook for her good food, that you may put on her good clothes, that you may spread for her a good bed, that you may amuse her with good amusements, she is your mother, she is your father, she is your husband, she is your friend [or 'female relative' – IKS], she is your daughter. Well then, I beg of you, take great care of the child.'  
 (translation by E. Steere)

A similar example of positive values mapped by the metaphor a person is kin is shown in (5a), excerpted from modern Swahili prose; the words are said to a granddaughter by a grandmother who has been raising the girl after the death of her parents. While using the imagery of 'mother' and 'father' in reference to herself in the context of raising the child single-handedly might invoke a target domain of parental obligation, no such explanation holds for the second part of the grandmother's utterance, in which it is the granddaughter who is framed in this way. Therefore, the only possible interpretation of this metaphor relies on parental love. The same metaphor appears in (5b), except that it is used by a young man speaking to a girl he loves and intends to marry. The example in (5c) comes from a contemporary television series. In the episode, a girl is talking to her mother on behalf of her sister Sophia, begging the mother to accept her daughter's passion for playing football. The girl ends (and wins) her argument with a strong metaphor, in which a kinship relation between mother and daughter is framed as an identity relation (mother and daughter are one thing). The same metaphor appears in the final example in (5d), where, in a moment of reconciliation after a previous serious dispute, mother and daughter are literally called by the narrator 'one thing'.

- (5) a. Ndiyo hali ya dunia hiyo, mjukuu wangu. Mimi ndiye baba yako, na ndiye mama yako. Na wewe ndiye mama yangu, na ndiye baba yangu. (*Rabeka*, p. 7)  
 ‘This is a condition of this world, my grandchild. It is me who is your father, and who is your mother. And it is you who is my mother, and who is my father.’
- b. Wazazi wangu wanakupenda, wanaona nikiwa na wewe hata wao wakifa, nitabaki na mama yangu na baba, nao ni wewe Rabeka. (*Rabeka*, p. 58)  
 ‘My parents like you and they think that if I am with you, even when they die I will stay with my mother and father, [because] they are you, Rabeka.’
- c. Tafadhali, mama. Sophia ni mtoto wako. Wewe ni yeye na yeye ni wewe. (*The team*, episode 13)  
 ‘Please, mother. Sophia is your child. You are her and she is you.’
- d. Sasa hitilafu iliyokuwapo baina yao ikayeyuka kwa joto la mapenzi na huruma, wakawa kitu kimoja. (*Kiu*, p. 30)  
 ‘Now, the disagreement that had been between them melted down from the heat of love and compassion and they became one thing.’

Family ties often become a topic on *kanga* inscriptions, too. Among them, the ones which feature motherly love or one’s love for one’s mother are particularly frequent, as well as those which simply honor the mother or express gratitude to her, as for example, *Mama ni nambari wani hana mpinzani* ‘Mother is number one, she has no rival’, or *Mama asante sana* ‘Thank you very much, mother’.

This section has demonstrated that in Swahili culture kinship concepts are associated with strong positive values. This axiological marking is mapped by means of metaphor on the figurative uses of kinship terms in various contexts.

## 4 | PATTERNS OF METAPHORIC KINSHIP

The habit of addressing non-kin by forms denoting “true” kinship relations is known in many cultures around the world and has been referred to in the academic literature by various terms, for example, as *non-genealogical* or *metaphoric* kinship (Agha 2007), *fictive* kinship (Braun 1988), or *truth violation* terms (Habwe 2010). In this article, the term *metaphoric kinship* will be preferred because the cognitive mechanism responsible for this extension is that of metaphor, as already discussed in section 3. The phenomenon has been previously described for Swahili, although in a rather cursory manner (cf. Beck 2003, Habwe 2010, Kraska-Szlenk 2009, 2018, Podobińska 1997, 2001). It is agreed among various authors that this form of address is quite common among Swahili speakers and that in most situations it is polite and gentle. In some cases, it may help to create an informal and warm atmosphere. It frequently occurs in contexts where a speaker offers verbal comfort and support to an addressee experiencing a difficult situation. It may also have the perlocutionary effect of manipulating an addressee into a certain action or change of thought, as discussed in section 5.

Certain kinship terms tend to occur in their fictive sense more often than others. These include *mwanangu* ‘my child’ said to children, but under special circumstances to adults by persons older by approximately one generation. The term *baba* ‘father’ directed to a man older by one generation seems to be more common in a metaphorical sense than other terms of the same generational level, as *mjomba* ‘maternal uncle’ or *ami* ‘paternal uncle’. Some terms have become so general that we can talk about their full lexicalization, such as *mama* ‘mother’, with its distinguished sense ‘Ma’am’, ‘Mrs.’ (7 and 8 in Table 1), or *babu* ‘grandfather’, used in some contexts as a discourse marker, void of any features of an address term (cf. Kraska-Szlenk 2018). Conventionalized titles like *dada* ‘sister’ (‘older sister’ in its basic sense) and *kaka* ‘brother’ (‘older brother’ in the basic sense) might be used among youths, or directed to unknown young people, as for example, working in shops or as domestic help. The title *shangazi* ‘aunt’ is associated with tenderness, hence, the host of a once popular radio children program called *Shangazi Dolly* (Habwe

2010: 134), or *Shangazi Sizarina* – the columnist of the Kenyan newspaper *Taifa Leo*, who has been for many years responding to the readers' letters. The above examples and similar ones demonstrate conventionalized lexicalization patterns which represent further modification of the metaphoric address and will not be further discussed in this article.

However, in the case of such extended polysemy of Swahili kinship terms, a question can be posed: How do we know which contextual use is a metaphoric fictional address and which one represents some other sense, especially if the distinctions among them are sometimes very subtle? The response to this question must rely on a pragmatic situatedness which tells a hearer, as well as a researcher, which meaning is intended. From the perspective of linguistic analysis, all senses are organized into a structured logical network which reflects cognitively motivated paths of semantic development with consecutive stages hypothetically reconstructed and corresponding to diachronic changes (and sometimes supported by historical data). For example, *mama* in its use of 'female parent' is diachronically earlier than its use in all other senses of Table 1. Also, in a semantic synchronic network, all other senses of Table 1 can be logically extended step by step from this "basic" meaning.

The following section will demonstrate how a metaphoric kinship address is used in context and fulfils various illocutionary and perlocutionary needs. The linguistic material has been excerpted from dialogues coming from Swahili literature (prose and drama). The data collected in this way presents speech acts in diversified situational contexts in which speakers' emotions and intentions are also well known. This has a remarkable advantage over other methods of data collection, as for example, by data elicitation from real speech acts where the contexts are not sufficiently varied and speakers' motivations are not that well known, or by means of questionnaires which reveal native speakers' suppositions and not necessarily their true linguistic behaviors.

The literary sources used for the data span over a large time period: from the oldest text of an oral story collected in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and published in 1870 to the newest modern literature. Although some uses of certain kinship terms have undergone various diachronic changes within such a long time or even in recent years (cf. Kraska-Szlenk

2018), it is my contention that metaphorical “fictive” kinship was traditionally used and remains very similar in its functions<sup>6</sup> up until today. It is also very frequent in Swahili literature and the data can be found easily. I have decided to combine several various sources together in order to present samples of different styles and uses rather than limit examples to a specific source or period.

## 5 | METAPHOR A PERSON IS KIN IN CONVENTIONALIZED FORMS OF ADDRESS

Unlike the previous examples in (4) and (5) analyzed in section 3 which were all creative uses, the cases discussed in this section represent fully conventionalized strategies reflecting the same metaphor A PERSON IS KIN in its specific instantiations. In all of the examples, metaphorical kinship terms are used as address titles – this use of them is most common, although sporadically they may occur in referential use, too.

One of the most common uses of metaphoric kinship is when an adult calls a child or a young person *mwanangu* in order to express positive feelings, such as affection, sympathy or support. In the novel *Rabeka*, a woman from the neighborhood calls the title character named Rabeka *mwanangu* (p. 33) in order to express compassion and to offer assistance during the time when the girl’s grandmother is seriously ill. In the same novel, the same fictive strategy is applied within a family by the girl’s grandmother who sometimes calls her *mjukuu wangu*, the familial title which appropriately reflects the kinship relation, but occasionally *mwanangu* (for example on p. 29), simply as a more affectionate form of address.

The interplay of two metaphorical frames: granparent-grandchild and parent-child, each conveying specific connotations, is transparently manifested in a long dialogue from an old narrative of *Sultan Darai* (pp. 90-94). The conversation takes place between a magic gazelle, which acts and is addressed in the story like a young man, and an old woman – a serv-

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<sup>6</sup> What might have changed in time is the frequency of use, but that is beyond my capacity to investigate.

ant in the palace owned by a monster. When the gazelle arrives at the palace door and hears a voice of an old woman asking who is coming, he says: *mimi, bibi mkubwa, mjukuu wako* 'it is me, grandma (literally 'big/old grandmother'), your grandchild'. This form of framing their newly established relationship remains at the beginning of the conversation, with the gazelle addressing the woman *bibi* or *bibi mkubwa* (five times in total) and the woman calling the gazelle *mjukuu wangu* 'my grandchild' (five times). However, at a certain point, when the woman understands that the newcomer is very well-behaved and has good intentions (he will attempt to kill the monster), she starts to like him very much and sympathizes with him, afraid for his life. At this moment, she changes the form of address for *mwanangu* (used ten times) and affectionate inverted address *baba* (seven times). The gazelle immediately responds with *mama* and keeps this form of address until the end of the conversation (eight times). The established cordial parent-child framing and appropriate mutual address between the two protagonists remains later in the story, too.

Framing an unrelated child as one's own is also used for the purpose of gentle reprimand and teaching good manners. A character from a play by Khamis (2016), Bi Huba, uses *mwanangu* as the only address term while talking to a teenage girl from the neighborhood who has dropped by to pick up Bi Huba's daughter on their way to school. The woman, of very gentle demeanor, wants to reprimand the girl for her bad manners, but is doing it in a very calm and polite way. The term *mwanangu*, used as many as seven times in a short conversation, certainly helps to shorten the distance and soothes the criticism, as illustrated by the example in (6a) below. Later on in the play, the same teenage girl is approached by Bi Huba's husband who is also trying to gently persuade her to change her behavior. The man also uses the cordial address *mwanangu* and explicitly makes a point of his fatherly caring for her, as seen in (6b).

- (6) a. Mwanangu, Baya, wewe ni mtoto mzuri sana lakini leo najuwa umesahau tu. Si kawaida yako kuingia ndani ya nyumba ya mtu bila ya kupiga hodi na kuingia ndani kabla ya kukaribishwa. (*Tafrani*, p. 9)

‘Baya, my child, you are a very good girl and I know that today you only forgot [about something]. It is not your habit to get into somebody’s house without calling *hodi*<sup>7</sup> and enter inside before being invited.’

- b. Baya mwanangu. Mimi nataka ujuwe kuwa ninakuchukulia ni sawa na mwanangu Mwema, nyote ni wanangu. (*Tafrani*: 35)  
 ‘Baya, my child. I want you to know that I treat you on par with my daughter Mwema, you both are my daughters.’

A similar strategy is illustrated in the following example and demonstrates that it might be effective when other means fail. While riding on a bus, a woman is talking to an unknown boy trying to persuade him to offer his seat to an elderly man. This happens after several other persons have already tried to do the same. The woman’s speech starts with the words quoted in (7a), in which she frames herself as the boy’s mother: this is expressed by the address title *mwanangu* ‘my child’ and the self-reference *mama yako* ‘your mother’. When the boy refuses to leave his seat, she continues to talk using the same address *mwanangu* in a gentle persuasion. Eventually, the boy gets up and responds to the woman in a polite way using the address *mama*. The narrator comments that the woman expressed *upendo halisi ya kimama* ‘distinctive motherly love’ in her speech. The boy’s final words, quoted in (7b), confirm that he received the message.

- (7) a. Mwanangu, nakusihi umpishe mzee akae. Mimi mama yako nakuomba. (*Heri*, p. 5)  
 ‘My child, I am begging you to let the man sit down. I, your mother, am asking you.’
- b. Mtoto gani atakataa upendo? (*Heri*, p. 5)  
 ‘What child will deny love?’

The above examples in (6) and (7) have demonstrated that metaphorical address exhibits perlocutionary effects when applied to children.

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<sup>7</sup> This Swahili custom is the equivalent of knocking on the door.

But it can also be used for the purpose of manipulation between adults. The example in (8), cited after Kraska-Szlenk (2009), demonstrates how two adult men – an uncle and his grown-up nephew – immediately switch to metaphoric address forms when the topic of the conversation becomes delicate: the uncle does not approve of the young man’s choice of a prospective wife. The cordial address *mwanangu*, as illustrated in (8a-b), instead of the unmarked address of the nephew’s first name, is meant to provide a more efficient discourse strategy. The nephew likewise abandons the previously used address *ami* ‘uncle’ for the more tender title *baba*, as shown in (8c-d).

- (8) a. Ya nini kwenda kutafuta Wahindi mwanangu. Wewe una jamaa zako chungu nzima, kuukeni na kuumeni. [...] Ndugu yako Somoye yupo hapa. Kama unataka mke kweli tutakuoza Somoye (*Vuta*, p. 254).  
 ‘Why trouble and look for Indians, my son? You have got a lot of relatives, on the mother’s and the father’s side. [...] Your cousin Somoye is here. If you really want a wife, we will arrange for you to marry Somoye.’
- b. Mke mwanangu ni mtu wa kuchagua kwa makini sana. Mke ni mwenzako katika safari ya maisha (*Vuta*, p. 255).  
 ‘A wife, my son, is someone to be chosen very carefully. A wife is your companion in the journey of life.’
- c. Sikiliza baba. [...] Huyu mchumba wenyewe tumejuana tokea Mombasa. Tulikuwa tukiishi jirani (*Vuta*, p. 254).  
 ‘Listen, baba. [...] As for my fiancée, we have known each other since Mombasa. We used to live next door.’
- d. Sikuvunja ndoa ya mtu baba. Yeye mwenyewe huyo mwanamke alikuwa hamtaki mumewe (*Vuta*, p. 254).  
 ‘I did not break up anybody’s marriage, *baba*. This woman herself did not want her husband.’

The final example discussed below shows how address forms change during a conversation while the speakers attempt to manipulate interlocu-

tors' emotions and to preserve their own metaphorical "face". The excerpts in (9) come from a conversation between an old woman and a young man who is hoping to marry her granddaughter Rabeka. *Bibi* is the only title the man uses to address the woman – nine times in total, including one occurrence of *Bibi Rabeka*. When the man arrives at their house, the woman addresses him with the title *bwana* 'Sir, Mr.' and his name: *Bwana Soni*, but later with his name alone which occurs twice during their conversation. This neutral form of address correlates with the woman's bad opinion about the young man and her wish to keep a distance. At a certain moment she leaves the room for the kitchen and does not come back. The man calls her and when she enters the room, he speaks the words in (9a) in a joking manner. This time, the woman's apologetic response in (9b) includes the cordial address *mjukuu* lit. 'my grandchild'. All forms of address in this conversation demonstrate perlocutionary effects. Using the title *bibi* by the man appears as a natural polite form of address toward the elderly woman with whom he is well acquainted. But the young man uses this title so often that eventually he enforces a symmetrical use of *mjukuu* by the woman. She, on the other hand, by avoiding the fictive address shows the man her distance, which must be clearly understood by him as a lack of enthusiasm for his marriage proposal. Only when feeling guilty of offending the man, does she resort to the cordial form which in this situation helps them both save face.

(9) a. Nakwenda miye. Nimengojea weeee! Utatokea hapa sikuoni, vipi bibi hupendi kuongea na mimi?

'I am leaving. I have been waiting for you! Will you come here, I can't see you, what's up, grandma, don't you want to talk to me?'

b. Siyo hivyo mjukuu wangu, nilikuwa na kazi kidogo huku jikoni. (*Rabeka*, p. 13)

'It is not like this, my grandson, I had some work [to do] in the kitchen.'

The above situation contrasts with another episode from the same novel, when another man, named Msuku, comes to visit Rabeka and

her grandmother for the same purpose of marriage proposal. Msuku is a respectable middle-aged man and the grandmother is in favor of marrying Rabeka to him. Upon his arrival, Msuku greets the woman as *Bibi* (p. 17). She responds with *Bwana Msuku* and this form of address prevails in their conversation (pp. 17-20), although the woman occasionally uses either the name alone (*Msuku*) or only the title (*Bwana*). On one occasion she addresses him with the cordial term *mjukuu* – when she invites the man for a meal (p. 17) and one time she calls him *mwanangu* – when she assures him that her granddaughter is willing to marry him. Later on in the book, when he is already married to her granddaughter, she once calls him *baba*, which can be understood rather as a very affectionate inverted *mwanangu* than the fictive form. This interpretation is supported by the context of the scene: the woman is on her deathbed, taken care of by her granddaughter and her son-in-law.

## 6 | CONCLUSION

Kinship terms were first investigated by anthropologists and they presented a problem in early research, because their polysemy and contexts of use were not properly recognized and because kinship terminology and kinship relations tended to be equalized. This sometimes led to great confusion and misinterpretation<sup>8</sup>. According to the influential classification of Morgan (1870), Swahili would be most likely called the *Iroquois* type, due to the fact that the term *mama* can refer to a mother or a mother's sister and *baba* can be used for a father as well as for a paternal uncle.

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<sup>8</sup> The following sarcastic remark by Sven Lindqvist is perhaps better than any other comment: "When I was little, I was taught to call every adult man 'uncle'. It was usual in those days, and nobody took it as proof that every adult male really could be my father's brother, or that my paternal grandmother had practised group sex. [...] But when the wealthy American businessman Lewis Henry Morgan found out that certain North American Indians called each other 'brother' and 'sister', he was prompted into novel and titillating trains of thought. Perhaps, Morgan speculated, this is a form of address surviving from an earlier era when everyone of the same generation could be biological brothers and sisters because their parents lived in group marriages and practised group sex" (Lindqvist 2007: 34).

Other uses of these terms, illustrated earlier in Tables 1 and 2, might have been unrecognized or even misinterpreted. Modern research on kinship terms is quite different and takes into account a large context of genealogical ties, social relations, cultural factors and linguistic usage practices. The importance of social deixis of address terms in the on-line production of language is recognized by both, anthropologists and linguists, as exemplified by a sample of the following references.

In anthropological research on kinship, Zeitlyn (1993) emphasizes the deictic function of kinship terminology and its pragmatic sensitivity to the context. Agha (2007) recognizes metaphoric uses of kinship terms which are in contradiction to “genealogical facts”. He introduces a notion of a *tropic* use of a kinterm which he defines as: “an entextualized act in which the semiotic sketch of social relations implemented through the use of a kinterm is non-congruent with a contextual model of social relations independently readable as holding between participants. Such tropes can also become widely recognized or enregistered as acts appropriate to certain contexts and, thus, themselves acquire the status of **normalized models** [emphasis his]; and these, in turn, can iteratively be troped upon by those acquainted with them” (Agha 2007: 342n).

Similar observations on the social deixis of kinship terms and address forms in general have been made by linguists. Braun (1988) develops the idea of a *social* meaning, earlier proposed by Lyons (1977), pointing out that its connotations can entirely overrule the original, etymological meaning. Dickey (1997) demonstrates that the *referential* meaning of the word can be quite different from its use as an address form. Keshavarz (2001) evidences that variation in address forms (including pronouns) depends on social distance, but also on the degree of formality of social context. In general, social deixis encompasses various factors, including mutual attitudes and permanent relationships between the interlocutors, but also temporary factors, such as, a socio-cultural setting and context of a particular speech act, as well as emotions accompanying it.

This article supports the claim that the use of Swahili kinship terms in their metaphorical “fictive” sense is tightly connected to other linguistic and social behaviors being an instantiation of the same cultural model. It has been also demonstrated that each instance of a kinship term use has

to be investigated in a pragmatic context, because only then can nuances of interpretation be observed and properly understood. The cognitive linguistic approach proposed here provides the necessary instruments (an organized semantic network, cognitive processes) to account for the polysemy and all contextual uses of kinship terms. The article has also shown how important it is to consider linguistic data in a larger context of a *cultural model*, taking into account the community's social behaviors and the system of values.

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