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## EXPLORING ENDEARING METAPHORS AMONG SWAHILI YOUTHS IN MOMBASA COUNTY, KENYA: INSIGHTS FROM CONCEPTUAL MAPPINGS

Susižavėjimą išreiškiančių metaforų, vartojamų Mombasos apskrityje, Kenijos svahilių jaunuolių, tyrimas: ižvalgos iš konceptų žemėlapių

### ANNOTATION

Endearing metaphors are valuable for enriching communication and fostering closer and more meaningful relationships through the expression of affection and intimacy. Interpreting endearing metaphors can, however, be difficult due to their cultural distinctions and context-dependent meanings. Against this backdrop, this study employed the principle of conceptual mappings to analyze the endearing metaphors commonly used by the male

Swahili youths in Mombasa County to woo their beloved. The research was anchored within a descriptive research design. Primary data was collected from four purposively sampled Swahili male youths through an interview schedule. The collected data were then subjected to the Metaphor Identification Procedure *Vrije Universiteit* (MIPVU) in which four annotators were used to identify endearing metaphors. Seven endearing metaphors that are commonly used by the Male Swahili youths in Mombasa County were identified through MIPVU. The endearing metaphors were then subjected to the principle of conceptual mappings to reveal their meaning. The paper reveals that young Swahili men in Mombasa County use endearing metaphors to express affection, admiration, and romantic interest in their beloved. They also use these metaphors to inspire a sense of connection and emotional intimacy while aiming at building a relationship based on care and mutual affection. The study concludes that endearing metaphors are useful communication tools, and should be interpreted within the Cognitive Linguistics framework.

**KEYWORDS:** Endearing Metaphors, Swahili, Conceptual Mappings, Cognitive Linguistics, MIPVU.

## A NOTACIJA

Susižavėjimą (meilinimąsi) išreiškiančios metaforos praturtina bendravimą ir skatina ar-timesnį ir prasmingesnį santykius siekiant prieraišumo ir intymumo. Dėl šių metaforų kultūrinių skirtumų ir nuo konteksto priklausančių jų reikšmių paaškinti metaforas gali būti sudėtinga. Atsižvelgus į tai, šiame tyrime analizuojant susižavėjimą (meilinimąsi) išreiškiančias metaforas, kurias dažniausiai vartoja Mombasos apskrties svahilių jaunuoliai, norėdami užkalbinti mylimą žmogų, taikytas konceptų žemėlapių principas. Tyrimas atliktas pagal aprašymą. Pirminiai duomenys buvo surinkti interviu metu iš keturių tikslingai atrinktų svahilių tautybės jaunuolių. Po to surinktiems duomenims pritaikyta metaforų identifikavimo procedūra *Vrije Universiteit* (MIPVU), pagal kurią keturi tyrimo dalyviai identifikavo susižavėjimą (meilinimąsi) reiškiančias metaforas. Naudojant MIPVU buvo nustatytos septynios metaforos, kurias dažniausiai vartoja Mombasos apskrties svahilių jaunuoliai. Tam, kad būtų atvaizduotos šių metaforų reikšmės, vėliau joms buvo pritaikytas konceptų žemėlapių principas. Straipsnyje atskleidžiama, kad Mombasos apskrties svahilių tautybės jaunuoliai vartoja žavėjimosi metaforas norėdami išreišksti meilę, susižavėjimą ir romantišką susidomėjimą mylimu žmogumi. Šias metaforas jie taip pat naudoja siekdamis paskatinti ryšio ir emocinio artumo jausmą, o kartu ir siekdamis sukurti rūpesčiu ir abipuse meile pagrįstus santykius. Tyrime daroma išvada, kad susižavėjimo (meilinimosi) metaforos yra naudingos komunikacijos priemonės, kurios turėtų būti aiškinamos kognityvinės lingvistikos sistemoje.

**ESMINIAI ŽODŽIAI:** susižavėjimą reiškiančios metaforos, svahilių kalba, konceptų žemėlapiai, kognityvinė lingvistika, MIPVU.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Endearing terms play a pivotal role in nurturing intimacy within romantic relationships. These terms are affectionate words or phrases used to express love or emotional closeness between individuals, often in romantic or intimate relationships. The use of these terms often helps to nurture a sense of connection and intimacy. According to Suvi T. Koiranen (2015), endearing terms usually serve as linguistic expressions of affection and emotional closeness. These terms, ranging from classic endearings like *darling* and *sweetheart* to more personalized nicknames, often carry layers of meaning unique to each couple (Floyd 2006). Endearing terms also serve as verbal markers of the bond shared between partners, and help to foster a sense of warmth and connection. Koiranen (2015) also notes that in intimate relationships, endearing terms create a safe space where vulnerability is embraced and love is openly celebrated.

Beyond mere words, the use of endearing terms in intimate relationships reflects a deeper understanding of one another's emotional needs and desires (Floyd, Riforgiate 2008). These terms also act as gentle reminders of the admiration and appreciation partners hold for each other which helps to reinforce the foundation of mutual respect and affection. Whether whispered softly during moments of intimacy or casually woven into everyday conversations, endearing terms serve as constant affirmations of love and devotion (ibid.). These terms are also fundamental in enriching the emotional landscape of the relationship and strengthening the bond between partners. The present study seeks to establish how often affection is enacted through the use of terms of endearing. This is motivated by Koiraren (2015) who argues that the use of terms of endearing is an area that has not been adequately studied.

Among the Swahili community in Mombasa County, endearing terms are not just linguistic tools but cultural expressions deeply embedded in the fabric of romance. According to Jane M. Ombati and Philes N. Onchieku (2021), male youths among the Swahili in Mombasa County, often employ a rich array of endearing terms to woo and charm their beloved. These terms, ranging from the classic *habibi* (beloved) to more colloquial expressions like *kidege* (a little bird) serve as poetic declarations of love and devotion that resonate with the melodious rhythms of the Swahili language.

The use of endearing terms by male youths also reflects not only their romantic intentions but also a deep appreciation for the traditions of courtship and romance. Additionally, these terms are employed with finesse to capture the essence of Swahili romance where gestures of affection are intertwined with the beauty of language. Through the use of endearing terms, male youths in Mombasa County express their desire to forge meaningful connections with

their beloved by drawing upon centuries-old cultural practices to navigate the intricate journey of love and courtship in their community.

According to Koiranen (2015), endearing terms often emerge as metaphorical expressions. These terms often transcend mere words. They employ metaphors to reflect the depth of affection shared between partners. The metaphorical language often elevates the ordinary into the realm of the extraordinary, infusing everyday interactions with a sense of magic and wonder, and affirming the unique bond between individuals in love. According to Victor O. Ntabo (2022), although metaphors are powerful in their ability to convey complex emotions, they can often be challenging to interpret due to their abstract nature. The meaning behind a metaphor may vary greatly depending on individual perspectives and cultural contexts. This can lead to potential misunderstandings. Interpretation of metaphors requires a clear understanding of language and context, as well as an appreciation for the metaphorical intent behind the words. It is against this backdrop that the present study subjects metaphorical endearing terms used by the youths among the Swahili in Mombasa County to the principle of conceptual mappings to comprehensively reveal their meaning. It is important to note that endearing metaphors are figurative expressions used to convey affection and emotional closeness by comparing a loved one to something cherished or admired. These metaphors go beyond literal language to evoke deeper feelings, thus, enhancing the emotional connection between individuals through symbolic imagery.

The study aims to analyze the endearing metaphors employed by young Swahili men in Mombasa County as tools for expressing affection and romantic intentions towards their beloved. By examining these metaphors within their cultural context, the study seeks to uncover how they reflect the emotional and social dynamics of courtship in the Swahili community. To achieve this, the study focuses on identifying the commonly used endearing terms, determining which of them are metaphorical, analyzing their conceptual mappings within the framework of Cognitive Linguistics, and interpreting how these metaphors reflect the cultural norms and values of love and courtship among Swahili youths. This helps reveal how metaphorical endearing terms in the Swahili context not only convey affection but also reflect deeper cultural values and cognitive patterns in romantic communication.

A metaphor can be defined as a figure of speech that describes one thing in terms of another. According to George O. Ogal, Moses G. Gathigia and Joseph N. Maitaria (2019), the study of metaphor traces back to ancient Greece, where Aristotle first explored the concept in his work titled *Poetics*. However, it wasn't until the 20<sup>th</sup> century that metaphor studies truly began to flourish as a distinct field of inquiry. The seminal work of linguists and philosophers

like George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) laid the foundation for modern metaphor theory. Their insights revolutionized our understanding of language by emphasizing that metaphors are not merely rhetorical devices but fundamental cognitive mechanisms through which we comprehend and conceptualize the world.

Dalibor Pavlas, Ondřej Vrabel' and Jiří Kozmér (2018) define metaphors as linguistic expressions that describe one thing in terms of another. This, according to Pavlas, Vrabel and Kozmer, is achieved by highlighting similarities between two things and imbuing the subject with additional meaning or significance. Metaphors, according to Moses G. Gathigia (2014), transcend the literal meaning of words and allow us to convey complex ideas, emotions, and experiences through symbolic language. Moreover, metaphors function as cognitive tools, shaping our perceptions and influencing how we make sense of reality (Naicker 2016). By drawing parallels between disparate concepts, metaphors facilitate understanding by providing familiar frames of reference, enabling us to grasp abstract or unfamiliar concepts in terms of more concrete, tangible imagery.

The metaphors in the present research were examined within the Cognitive Linguistics paradigm. Cognitive linguistics (CL) is a multidisciplinary approach to the study of language that views language as an integral part of human cognition, shaped by our experiences, perceptions, and conceptual systems (Janda 2015). Unlike traditional approaches to linguistics that prioritize formal structures and grammar rules, CL focuses on understanding how language reflects and influences the way we think and perceive the world (Onchoke 2018). At the core of CL is the belief that language is not a static system of symbols but rather a dynamic tool for constructing meaning and understanding. Cognitive linguists often investigate how language structures such as metaphors, idioms, analogy, and counter-factual reasoning emerge from cognitive processes like categorization, image schemata, and conceptual mappings among others.

Worthwhile to note is that metaphor is a central concept in cognitive linguistics (CL). According to Pamela Faber (2002), metaphor is fundamental in highlighting the symbolic and conceptual nature of language in CL. Cognitive linguists argue that metaphors are not just rhetorical embellishments but fundamental mechanisms through which we conceptualize and make sense of our experiences. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) also note that metaphors are pervasive in language and thought. Consequently, metaphors help to shape how we understand abstract concepts by mapping them onto more concrete domains. This argument is buttressed by Faber (2002) who posits that in CL, metaphorical expressions like *time is money* or *love is a journey* are not just linguistic quirks but reflections of underlying conceptual mappings that structure our understanding of the world. By examining how metaphors are

grounded in embodied experiences and cognitive processes, the present study provides valuable insights into the intricate relationship between language, thought, and perception in relation to the endearing metaphors used by youths in Mombasa County.

The primary data for the present study was drawn from Swahili youths in Mombasa County. The Swahili people are a diverse and culturally rich community whose history and identity are deeply intertwined with the Indian Ocean coast (Mwalewa 2018). Originating from a fusion of Bantu-speaking peoples with Arab, Persian, Indian, and other African influences, the Swahili culture is a vibrant mosaic of traditions, languages, and customs (*ibid.*). Historically known for their role in trade and maritime commerce, the Swahili established prosperous city-states along the coast, such as Kilwa, Mombasa, and Zanzibar, which became centres of cultural exchange and economic activity. With Swahili as their *lingua franca*, they facilitated communication and trade between the interior of Africa and the wider Indian Ocean world (Chebet-Choge 2012). Today, the Swahili people are spread across coastal regions of Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, and other parts of East Africa, and they maintain a strong sense of cultural identity through their language, cuisine, music, and distinctive architectural styles characterized by intricately carved doors and Arab-influenced designs. Their enduring legacy continues to shape the cultural landscape of East Africa, reflecting a rich history of heritage and resilience.

Situated along the picturesque shores of the Indian Ocean, the Swahili community of Mombasa County embodies a unique blend of coastal heritage and cultural diversity (Mwalewa 2018). At the heart of their identity lies the Swahili language which serves as a unifying force that bridges diverse ethnic backgrounds and historical influences. Susan Chebet-Choge (2012) notes that marriage rites among the Swahili of Mombasa County are steeped in tradition. They are often characterized by elaborate ceremonies that symbolize the union of families and the strengthening of community bonds. Important to note is that most young Swahili men often employ a repertoire of poetic endearings to woo their beloved.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Analysis of the metaphorical terms employed by male Swahili youths to woo their beloved in Mombasa County was guided by the principles of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). One of the basic theoretical pillars of CMT is that metaphors are primarily a characteristic of language that belongs to the realm of thinking (*ibid.*). CMT suggests that

metaphor is not just a linguistic device but a fundamental cognitive mechanism through which we understand one thing in terms of another.

Another fundamental tenet of CMT is the provision that there are two conceptual domains which are: the source domain (SD) and the target domain (TD). The SD is the conceptual domain from which the metaphor is drawn while the TD is the conceptual domain to which the metaphor is applied (Ntabo 2022). Lakoff and Johnson (1980) also note that the SD is what is usually concrete, tangible or physical while the TD is what is abstract and intangible. According to Zoltán Kövecses (2005), the SD and the TD are also mental representations in which the TD is understood based on the characteristics of the SD.

The existence of conceptual mappings between the SD and the TD is another significant pillar of CMT that forms the basis for this study. Conceptual mappings are a systematic set of correspondences that exist between the constituent elements of the SD and the TD (Ntabo 2022). The concept of conceptual mappings provides a model of thinking that links two levels that include the SD and the TD with the result being meaning formation in which one thing is understood in terms of another. For example, in the metaphor *love is a journey*, love (the TD) is understood in terms of a journey (the SD). In this case, concepts like progress, obstacles, and destinations are mapped onto the experience of love to help make sense of what love is based on the concrete experience of the journey. It is the correspondences that are drawn between the concrete SD and the abstract TD that constitute the principle of conceptual mappings.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive research design. Cellyne N. Anudo (2012) asserts that the objective of a descriptivist is to provide an account of the current state of affairs at a specific moment. Consequently, researchers focus on recognizing, categorizing, and assessing research phenomena in their current state. Hossein Nassaji (2015) similarly observes that descriptivists frequently strive to unveil existing realities by precisely portraying a phenomenon and its attributes as it is. In the present study, the primary data which are the endearing terms that are commonly used by the male Swahili youths to woo their beloved in Mombasa County were collected through an interview schedule from purposively sampled male youths. The selected sample was made up of four Swahili male youths who were knowledgeable about the common endearing terms used by young men to woo young women into intimate relationships in Mombasa County. The factor of male Swahili youths was

considered an inclusion criterion for the research sample because, in Swahili culture, traditional gender roles often dictate that young men take the initiative in courting young women which embodies traits of bravery and assertiveness in pursuit of romantic relationships (Mwaliwa 2018). This dynamic reflects historical norms and societal expectations, where young men are culturally encouraged to demonstrate their affection and commitment through acts of courtship and wooing.

The interview schedule, which was designed as the primary data collection tool, included open-ended questions aimed at exploring both the literal and metaphorical use of endearing terms. The interviews were conducted over five weeks to allow for thorough engagement with the participants. The questions sought to identify specific endearing terms, their meanings, and cultural relevance, as well as how these terms were perceived by their beloved. The participants were also asked about the emotional impact of using such terms in courtship. This was useful in revealing how language intertwines with Swahili cultural practices of romance.

The study obtained seven endearing terms that are commonly used by male Swahili youths to woo their beloved in Mombasa County. The seven endearing terms were translated into English to enable non-Swahili speakers to make sense of them. The research utilized Normal Sentential Translation (NST) to translate text from Swahili to English. This choice was influenced by John M. Kobia (2016), who contends that several compelling aspects of metaphorical terms are easily translatable. NST is also ideal for this study because the focus of the present enquiry is to evaluate the endearing terms used by the Swahili male youths to unveil the societal and cultural perceptions about intimate relationships among the Swahili youths in Mombasa County. The study employed the Metaphor Identification Procedure *Vrije Universiteit* (MIPVU) by Gerard J. Steen *et al.* (2010) to establish the metaphoricality of the seven endearing terms. MIPVU is a metaphor identification procedure that was developed by metaphor scholars at Vrije University, Amsterdam (Ntabo *et al.* 2018). The study used four annotators (including the researchers) to validate the metaphoric nature of each of the seven terms using the MIPVU procedure. All four annotators were identified based on being university graduates. Consideration for the educational level qualification factor in choosing the annotators for this study was informed by Urmila Umardianti, Supartinah and Wahyu Kurniawati (2023) who posit that human being's capacity to critically synthesize abstract information to objectively reveal meaning is significantly influenced by one's level of education. The researchers trained the identified annotators on MIPVU to help them make informed decisions. As provided by MIPVU, a term was considered a metaphor Related Word (MRW) if its contextual meaning contrasted with its

basic meaning. The endearing terms were also marked metaphorical after at least three of the four annotators marked each of them as a metaphor. Each annotator assigned 0.25 or 25% to each endearing term which was considered metaphorical. If three annotators agreed, the study multiplied 0.25 times three to attain 0.75 which is 75%. According to Lynne Cameron and Christopher Candlin (2003), a term which attains 75% in an inter-rater reliability test is marked *not unanimous* but *acceptable* as a metaphor. Seven Metaphor-related Related Words (MRWs) were identified through the annotation guidelines adapted from the MIPVU. The identified metaphors were then subjected to the principle of conceptual mappings for analysis.

#### 4. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study identified seven metaphors which are presented in Table 1.1 below. The metaphors were subjected to the principle of conceptual mappings to reveal their meaning. The principle of conceptual mappings, which is a key tenet of Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), serves as a framework to understand how language reflects and shapes our cognitive processes. It suggests that our understanding of abstract or complex concepts often relies on mapping them onto more concrete and familiar domains. This process facilitates comprehension by grounding abstract ideas in tangible experiences or physical representations.

TABLE 1.1: Endearing Metaphors Commonly Used by Male Swahili Youths in Mombasa County

No.	Swahili	Gloss
1.	<i>Ua la waridi</i>	Rose flower
2.	<i>Kidege</i>	A little bird
3.	<i>Barafu wa moyo</i>	Ice of the heart
4.	<i>Asali</i>	Honey
5.	<i>Malaika</i>	An angel
6.	<i>Dawa ya mapenzi</i>	Love potion
7.	<i>Malkia</i>	Queen

The endearing metaphors, as indicated in Table 1.1 above, are commonly used by the male Swahili youths in Mombasa County to woo their beloved.

As pointed out by Hanah C. Mwaliwa (2018), endearing metaphors serve as linguistic tools to express admiration, affection, and intimacy among Swahili youths. In a society where interpersonal relationships are highly valued, employing such metaphors demonstrates sincerity, attentiveness, and a desire to establish emotional connections. For example, Swahili male youths employ metaphor (1) to not only express their romantic intentions but also signal their willingness to foster meaningful and respectful relationships with their beloved. Thus:

(1) *Mwanamke kijana ni ua la waridi* – ‘a young woman is a rose flower’.

The principle of conceptual mappings, as provided by Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) (CMT) was invoked to make sense of (1) above. According to Kövecses (2005), the cognitive model of conceptual mappings facilitates the interpretation of metaphors by linking abstract concepts to concrete domains. This enables us to understand complex ideas through familiar experiences. For (1) above, *mwanamke kijana* (a young woman) is compared with *ua la waridi* (a rose flower). A rose flower is the concrete source domain (SD) while a young woman is the abstract target domain (TD) in this case. The conceptual mappings which correspond between the SD and the TD are highlighted in Table 1.2 below:

TABLE 1.2: Conceptual Mappings of the Endearing Metaphor *a Young Woman is a Rose Flower*

No.	SD: <i>ua la waridi</i> (a rose flower)	→	TD: <i>mwanamke kijana</i> (a young woman)
1.	A rose flower is often associated with beauty and elegance.	→	A young woman often possesses qualities of attractiveness and grace.
2.	Roses are renowned for their pleasant fragrance.	→	Most young women exude a captivating aura.
3.	Rose petals are delicate and tender.	→	Young women are often known to be gentle, vulnerable, and deserving of care.
4.	People often admire and cherish roses for their aesthetic appeal.	→	Most young men admire and appreciate young women.
5.	Roses are commonly associated with romance and love.	→	Most young women evoke feelings of affection, passion, and longing.

The conceptual mappings for metaphor (1), highlighted in Table 1.2 above, reveal that young men often employ endearing expressions to convey admiration

and affection towards their beloved. Metaphor (1) embodies a spectrum of conceptual mappings between the source domain (SD) of a rose flower and the target domain (TD) of a young woman which reveals the endearing expressions of admiration that are intended for the young women in Mombasa County. Firstly, the association of a rose with beauty and elegance aligns with the Swahili perception of young women possessing similar qualities of attractiveness and grace. This reveals that most young Swahili men are attracted to young women's physical appearance and poise. This finding is corroborated by Ray Garza *et al.* (2016) who note that most young men are drawn to young women's physical appearance due to its association with beauty and elegance, which serves as a primary factor in sparking initial attraction. The allure of a young woman's aesthetics often plays a significant role in igniting feelings of admiration and desire among young men. Secondly, the metaphor draws parallels between the pleasant fragrance of roses and the captivating aura emitted by young women. This conceptual mapping evokes a sense of allure and charm. Young women's charm and aesthetics captivate young men in Mombasa County. The young men are often drawn with an irresistible allure that sparks feelings of admiration and desire.

Furthermore, the metaphor highlights the delicate nature of rose petals. This mirrors the perception of young women as gentle, vulnerable, and deserving of care. This mapping emphasizes the need for tenderness and affection in the relationship. It portrays a young woman as someone to be cherished and protected. This assertion is in line with Frank Marlowe, Coren Apicella and Dorian Reed (2005) who posit that young women are to be cherished, as they are perceived as delicate and deserving of care and protection within the cultural framework of courtship. Additionally, the admiration and appreciation commonly associated with roses extend to young women. This reflects the reverence and esteem young men hold for their beloved. Finally, the association of roses with romance and love encapsulates the deep emotional connections evoked by young women. According to Garza *et al.* (2016), rose flowers are intrinsically associated with love and romance. They symbolize affection, passion, and longing across various cultural contexts. Drawing parallels between rose flowers and young women, therefore, suggests that young women inspire feelings of affection, passion, and longing. This reinforces the notion of love as a central theme in courtship within the Swahili culture of Mombasa County.

The endearing metaphor (2) draws a comparison between young women and birds. According to Sylwia V. Rosińska (2016), human beings and birds share a complex relationship rooted in cultural, ecological, and evolutionary ties. Rosińska further notes that culturally, birds have captivated the human imagination for millennia by serving as symbols of freedom, wisdom, and

transcendence across various societies. Ecologically, humans and birds often inhabit overlapping environments which helps to shape each other's behaviors, ecosystems, and even evolutionary trajectories. Equating a human being with a bird is, therefore, acceptable. Thus:

(2) *Mwanamke kijana ni kidege* – 'a young woman is a little bird'.

In the endearing metaphor (2) above, *kidege* (a little bird) is the SD while *mwanamke kijana* (a young woman) is the corresponding TD. Conceptual mappings which serve as cognitive bridges that allow us to understand the TD in terms of the SD were used to understand metaphor (2) as highlighted in Table 1.3 below:

TABLE 1.3: Conceptual Mappings of the Endearing Metaphor *a Young Woman is a Little Bird*

No.	SD: <i>kidege</i> (a little bird)		TD: <i>mwanamke kijana</i> (a young woman)
1.	Little birds are often associated with delicacy and fragility.	→	Young women are associated with tenderness and vulnerability.
2.	Birds exhibit graceful movements and colourful plumage.	→	Most young women are characterized by elegance and attractiveness.
3.	Birds are often associated with freedom and independence due to their ability to fly.	→	Most young women enjoy independence and autonomy, especially in making key decisions regarding themselves.
4.	Little birds normally exhibit playful behaviour and possess an air of innocence.	→	Most young women's demeanour exude a youthful exuberance and innocence, enhancing their allure and appeal.

As indicated in Table 1.3 above, metaphor (3) elicits several conceptual mappings that reveal insights into perceptions and romantic ideals regarding young people among Swahili in Mombasa County. For instance, the association of little birds with delicacy and fragility aligns with the perception of young women as tender and vulnerable beings. This mapping suggests a desire by the Swahili young men to protect and cherish the beloved young women in Mombasa County. It emphasizes the need for care and gentleness in romantic relationships. This finding is buttressed by Garza *et al.* (2016) who argue that most young women are perceived as delicate and fragile by their admirers. This often prompts a desire to provide them with tender care and protection. This

perception underscores the importance placed on nurturing and cherishing the well-being of romantic partners within the cultural context of Mombasa County.

Furthermore, the mapping between the graceful movements and colourful plumage of birds and the elegance and attractiveness of young women underscores ideals of beauty and charm. By likening the young woman to the gracefulness of birds, the metaphor romanticizes her presence and allure, enhancing her desirability. It also reflects an appreciation for grace and beauty in romantic partners, particularly among the youths in Mombasa County. Additionally, the association of birds with freedom and independence resonates with the perception of young women as individuals with agency and autonomy. This mapping acknowledges the evolving roles of women in society. It, for example, recognizes their ability to make independent decisions and assert their independence, particularly in matters concerning themselves such as choosing who to love. As argued by Mwaliwa (2018), many modern young Swahili women possess the autonomy to choose their romantic partners. This reflects a departure from traditional norms where such decisions were often dictated by familial or societal expectations. This autonomy highlights a shift towards more individualistic and empowered expressions of love and relationships within the Swahili of Mombasa County.

Metaphor (3) uses the image of ice to express notions of romantic love. According to Ho T. Q. Thu and Phan V. Hoa (2019), ice can metaphorically symbolize the initial coolness or reserve often present at the beginning of a romantic relationship which often signifies a period of emotional distance or caution. However, just as the ice melts under the warmth of the sun, romantic love has the power to thaw emotional barriers and foster intimacy and connection between partners. The use of metaphor (3) by the male Swahili youth to refer to their beloved in Mombasa County is, therefore, grounded. Thus:

(3) *Mpenzi ni barafu wa moyo* – ‘a lover is the ice of the heart’.

In (3) above, *barafu wa moyo* (ice of the heart) is the SD while *mpenzi* (a lover) is the corresponding TD. The conceptual mappings which correlate between the SD and the TD for (3) above are shown in Table 1.4 below:

TABLE 1.4: Conceptual Mappings of the Endearing Metaphor *a Lover is Ice of the Heart*

No.	SD: <i>barafu wa moyo</i> (ice of the heart)		TD: <i>mpenzi</i> (a lover)
1.	Ice is often associated with coolness and calmness.	→	A young man might be conveying the idea that his beloved brings a sense of tranquility and peace to his heart comparable with the calming effect of ice.
2.	Ice is also associated with purity and freshness.	→	The love shared by a young man for his beloved is regarded to be refreshing and pure, like ice melting in a parched land, bringing renewal and vitality to his heart.
3.	Ice can withstand extreme conditions and pressures.	→	By likening his beloved to the ice of the heart, a young man might be suggesting that their love is resilient and strong, capable of enduring challenges and hardships without losing its essence.
4.	Ice can be opaque and mysterious, hiding depths beneath its surface.	→	This may suggest that a young man finds his beloved enigmatic and captivating, with layers of complexity waiting to be explored, just like the depths of the ice.

The conceptual mappings for metaphor (3), shown in Table 1.4 above, encapsulate a multitude of different meanings that are associated with romantic love among the Swahili youth in Mombasa County. These conceptual mappings provide insights into the underlying sentiments and intentions of the speaker. Firstly, ice's association with coolness and calmness suggests that the beloved brings a sense of tranquility and peace to the young man's heart which is comparable with the soothing effect of ice. As provided by Marlowe *et al.* (2005), the presence of a beloved has a remarkable way of bringing tranquillity to one's heart. Lovers, with their affectionate embrace and soothing words, create a serene sanctuary within the depths of one's soul. The first conceptual mapping for metaphor (3), therefore, highlights the emotional refuge the beloved provides amid life's turbulence which fosters a sense of serenity and stability in the relationship. Secondly, the metaphor's linkage to purity and freshness implies that the love shared by a young man is viewed as refreshing and untainted. This can be equated with ice melting in a parched land which symbolizes renewal

and vitality in a young man's heart. This conceptualization evokes a sense of rejuvenation and optimism and emphasizes the transformative power of love in enriching one's life.

Moreover, the metaphor's association with resilience and strength suggests that young men perceive their love as capable of withstanding adversities and challenges, without losing its essence. This resilience symbolized by ice underscores the durability and steadfastness of their bond, imbuing it with a sense of endurance and fortitude. Lastly, the metaphor's connection to opacity and mystery suggests that a young man finds his beloved to be enigmatic and captivating, with hidden depths waiting to be explored. This adds an element of intrigue and fascination to the relationship, enticing a young man to delve deeper into the complexities of his beloved's character.

Instantiation (4) in this study labels a lover as honey. According to Franco Pauletto, Karin Aronsson and Georgia Galeano (2017) *honey* is a term of endearing that carries warmth and sweetness, often used between partners or close friends to express affection. It symbolizes a deep connection and fondness and evokes feelings of comfort and intimacy within relationships. It is, therefore, justifiable for the young Swahili men in Mombasa County to use the term *honey* to refer to their beloved. Thus:

(4) *Mpenzi ni asali* – ‘a lover is honey’.

The present study sought to establish the connotations of the endearing term *honey* as used by the young Swahili men to intimately refer to their beloved. The information in the SD, *asali* (honey) was mapped onto the corresponding one in the TD, *mpenzi* (a lover) to reveal what the term *honey* stands for among the young Swahili people in Mombasa County. The conceptual mappings for metaphor (4) are listed in Table 1.5 below:

TABLE 1.5: Conceptual Mappings of the Endearing Metaphor *a Lover is Honey*

No.	SD: <i>asali</i> (honey)		TD: <i>mpenzi</i> (a lover)
1.	Honey is associated with sweetness.	→	This corresponds to the tender and delightful qualities of a lover, implying that the beloved brings joy and pleasure to one's life.
2.	Honey is characterized with stickiness.	→	The stickiness represents the closeness and attachment one feels towards their lover which suggests a bond that is strong and difficult to break.
3.	Honey is often associated with nutrition and sustenance.	→	A lover provides emotional nourishment and support hence enriching one's life.

No.	SD: <i>asali</i> (honey)		TD: <i>mpenzi</i> (a lover)
4.	Honey is a natural substance, free from artificial additives.	→	This symbolizes the genuine and authentic nature of the love shared between two individuals, emphasizing sincerity and trust.

As shown in Table 1.5 above, metaphor (4) presents conceptual mappings that reflect the essence of romantic relationships within the context of young Swahili people in Mombasa County. For example, the association of honey with sweetness aligns with the perception of a lover as someone who brings joy and delight into one's life. As opined by Garza *et al.* (2016), a lover is often a radiant beacon that fills another's heart with boundless joy. This conceptualization emphasizes the emotional aspect of love by portraying the beloved as a source of happiness and contentment.

Moreover, the characterization of honey as sticky corresponds to the sense of closeness and attachment inherent in romantic relationships. This mapping suggests a bond that is not only strong but also enduring which reflects a deep emotional connection between partners. The stickiness of honey symbolizes the intimate nature of love. It also implies a level of closeness that is difficult to sever. Additionally, the association of honey with nutrition and sustenance highlights the role of a lover in providing emotional nourishment and support. Just as honey is a source of energy and vitality, a lover, as pointed out by Pauletto *et al.* (2017), often enriches one's life with love, care, and understanding hence contributing to personal growth and well-being. Finally, the portrayal of honey as a natural substance, free from artificial additives, underscores the authenticity of the love shared between two individuals. This conceptual mapping emphasizes trust and genuineness in romantic relationships. It highlights the importance of sincerity and transparency in fostering a strong and lasting bond. It is, therefore, clear that the male Swahili youths use a metaphor (4) to portray love as a source of sweetness, intimacy, nourishment, and authenticity particularly regarding their beloved in Mombasa County.

Metaphor (5) refers to an angel. *Angel* is a ubiquitous endearing term, often used to convey affection or admiration for someone's benevolent nature or loving actions (Marlowe *et al.* 2005). It usually symbolizes the role of a beloved one as a source of comfort and support in the lives of others. Its usage transcends cultures and languages and is universally recognized as a heartfelt expression of appreciation for the goodness and grace found in those we hold dear. The use of the term *angel* by the male Swahili youths to refer to their beloved ones in Mombasa County is, therefore, valid. Thus:

(5) *Mpenzi ni malaika* – ‘a lover is an angel’.

Metaphor (5) was subjected to the principle of conceptual mappings to reveal its connotations. *Malaika* (an angel) is the SD while *mpenzi* (a lover) is the corresponding TD for metaphors (5). The corresponding information between the SD and the TD, in this case, includes: firstly, the purity and grace associated with angels are comparable with the compassion and love often characterized by lovers. Secondly, mirroring the protective nature of angels, who are thought to watch over and safeguard those under their care, a lover is seen as a guardian of the heart that offers solace, guidance, and reassurance in times of need. Lastly, like how angels are revered for their celestial beauty and ethereal presence, a lover is admired for their captivating allure and radiant charm.

The conceptual mappings for metaphor (5) highlight the emotional significance attached to romantic relationships among the young Swahili people in Mombasa County. Firstly, the comparison of a lover to an angel highlights the perception of lovers as beings of purity and grace. Lovers often possess qualities of virtue, kindness, and compassion that elevate and inspire those around them. This suggests a deep appreciation for the moral and emotional support provided by lovers whose selfless love and benevolent spirit serve as sources of comfort and encouragement. Secondly, the metaphor draws parallels between the protective nature of angels and the role of lovers as guardians of the heart. Just as angels are believed to watch over and safeguard individuals, lovers are seen as sources of solace, guidance, and reassurance during times of emotional turmoil or vulnerability. This reflects the idea of lovers offering emotional security and stability within relationships which helps to foster a sense of trust and dependability. Lastly, the comparison between lovers and angels evokes notions of celestial beauty and ethereal presence. By admiring lovers for their captivating allure and radiant charm, the metaphor emphasizes the enchanting and awe-inspiring nature of romantic love. This suggests that within the cultural context of Mombasa County, romantic relationships are not only valued for their emotional support and protection but also celebrated for their inherent beauty and enchantment.

Metaphor (6) below draws a comparison between a lover and a love potion. Margaret E. Toye (2010) argues that a lover can be compared with a love potion because both love and a love potion can evoke passionate emotions that feel enchanting and transformative. Just as a love potion can create an intense attraction or infatuation, a lover can captivate and deeply affect one’s heart and mind. Use of (6) below by the young Swahili male to refer to their beloved is, hence, acceptable. Thus:

(6) *Mpenzi ni dawa ya mapenzi* – ‘a lover is a love potion’.

*Dawa ya mapenzi* (love potion) is the SD while *mpenzi* (a lover) is the TD in this case. To establish the conceptual meaning for (6) above, the conceptual information in the SD was mapped onto the corresponding one in the TD in line with Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT). The study established the following conceptual mappings for (6) above: one, a love potion often causes a euphoric and overwhelming sensation of love and desire which corresponds to the strong feelings of passion and infatuation often elicited by one's lover; two, love potion often transforms the drinker's emotional state, creating sudden and intense romantic feelings. This is equated with the power that a lover usually has to transform one's mood and outlook by bringing joy, excitement, and a sense of being emotionally revitalized; and; three, love potion normally creates a sense of craving or need for the person one is enchanted by. This can be compared with the strong emotional attachment and longing that a lover often inspires in one's beloved.

The conceptual meaning derived from the conceptual mappings for (6) above is that a lover has the transformative power to evoke intense emotional responses. As suggested by Sara Cantillon and Kathleen Lynch (2016), a beloved often captivates one's heart resulting in an emotional high similar to that produced by a potent elixir. This often makes a person feel euphoric, deeply infatuated, and intensely drawn to their lover. The conceptual mappings for (6) above also suggest that a lover can significantly alter one's mood and perspective by bringing joy, excitement, and a sense of emotional rejuvenation. This claim authenticates Kory Floyd's (2006) position that the presence of one's lover can infuse life with newfound happiness and vitality. A love potion is also known to generate a craving for the person one is enchanted by (Toye 2010). There is normally deep yearning that usually accompanies romantic love. It is, therefore, clear that a beloved becomes an indispensable source of emotional fulfilment for one.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes in the following manner based on the research findings: Endearing metaphors play a significant role in enhancing communication among Swahili youths in Mombasa County. The metaphors are particularly useful in expressing affection and emotional closeness. These metaphors not only facilitate the articulation of romantic feelings but also serve to strengthen the emotional bond between partners by allowing for both universally and culturally relevant expressions of love that resonate deeply within their social context. Additionally, by employing the principle of conceptual mappings,

the research illustrates how these metaphors serve as bridges between abstract feelings and tangible expressions, thus, enabling individuals to articulate complex emotions in a culturally resonant manner. The mappings not only illuminate the cultural and emotional contexts that shape the use of affectionate terms but also highlight the dynamic nature of the Swahili language as it evolves to reflect the intricacies of human relationships.

In the context of the Swahili language, the use of endearing metaphors emerges as a powerful means of communicating love and affection. These metaphorical expressions enrich interpersonal relationships by weaving together cultural values and emotional dimensions. This allows individuals to convey their feelings in ways that resonate deeply with their partners. The study also concludes that endearing metaphors are not merely decorative language but essential components of the Swahili lexicon that encapsulate the beauty and complexity of romantic expression. Thus, the effective use of metaphorical language in the Swahili context serves as a testament to the profound connections that love and affection forge within the cultural fabric of Mombasa County.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends the use of the principle of conceptual mappings to interpret emotional metaphors such as the endearing ones. This principle provides deeper insights into how abstract emotions are structured and understood through more tangible and familiar experiences. Conceptual mappings also help to uncover the cultural and cognitive patterns that influence emotional expression, hence, enhancing cross-cultural communication.

Moreover, studying emotional metaphors such as endearing terms using the Cognitive Linguistics (CL) framework is recommended. This is because CL allows for a comprehensive analysis of how these terms reflect underlying cognitive processes and cultural influences. This approach can reveal the metaphorical and conceptual structures that shape affectionate language which helps to enhance our understanding of how people express intimacy and connection. Moreover, CL provides valuable insights into the dynamic interplay between language, thought, and social interaction, thus, offering practical applications in communication and relationship studies.

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## Susižavėjimą išreiškiančių metaforų, vartojamų Mombasos apskrityje, Kenijos svahilių jaunuolių, tyrimas: ižvalgos iš konceptų žemėlapių

### SANTRAUKA

Tyrimo metu buvo nagrinėjamos susižavėjimą išreiškiančios metaforos, kurias dažniausiai vartoja svahilių jaunuoliai Mombasos apskrityje, norėdami užkalbinti savo mylimąją. Tyrime pažymima, kad šios metaforos yra labai svarbios skatinant intymumą romantiškuose santykiuose. Metaforos yra žodinė meilės ir emocinio artumo išraiška, stiprinanti partnerių ryšį. Mombasos apygardos svahilių jaunuolių tarpe vietinės susižavėjimą išreiškiančios metaforos turi gilų kultūrinį kontekstą, kuris stiprina partnerių ryšį. Tokios metaforos kaip *habibi* (*mano mylimasis, -oji*) ir *moyo wangu* (*mano širdis*) dažnai vartojamos prieraišumui išreikšti. Be to, susižavėjimą išreiškiančių metaforų vartojimas padeda kurti saugią erdvę, kurioje atvirai reiškiama meilė ir priimamas pažeidžiamumas. Metaforos taip pat primeina abipusį susižavėjimą. Pastebėta, kad Mombasos apskrityje jaunuoliai, norėdami išreikšti meilę ir romantiškus ketinimus, vartoja poetinius prieraišumo žodžius, kylančius iš reikšmingų kultūrinių tradicijų. Šios metaforos išprastus posakius paverčia rimtais pareiškimais taip sukurdamos bendrą emocinę koloritą, atspindintį unikalią svahilių romantikos dinamiką. Šiame tyrime metaforos buvo analizuojamos per konceptualiosios metaforos teorijos prizmę. Išnagrinėta, kaip jos atspindi kultūrines svahilių galantiškumo subtilybes kartu atskleidamos kalbos, minties ir tradicijų sąveiką. Duomenys buvo surinkti interviu su svahilių jaunuoliais metu. Jie atskleidė, kaip metaforos perteikia meilę kartu išpildydamos

ir kultūrinius meilikavimo lūkesčius. Tai pabrėžia kalbos vaidmenį formuojant romantikos suvokimą bendruomenėje.

Tyrimo metu buvo nustatytos ir išanalizuotos septynios susižavėjimą išreiškiančios metaforos, kurias dažniausiai vartoja svahilių jaunuoliai, norėdami užkalbinti savo mylimąją. Sudarius konceptų žemėlapius nustatyta, kad tam tikros sritys, tokios kaip gėlės, paukščiai, ledas ir medus, yra metaforų išteklių sritys, kuriose abstrakčios meilės ir susižavėjimo sąvokos grindžiamos pažįstamais vaizdais. Pavyzdžiui, metafora *jauna moteris yra rožės žiedas* remiasi grožio, grakstumo ir švelnumo asociacijomis, atspindinčiomis svahilių jaunų moterų patrauklumo ir pažeidžiamumo sąvoką. Panašiai metafora *jauna moteris yra paukštėlis* išryškina elegancijos, nepriklausomybės ir nekaltumo bruožus, o *mylimoji yra širdies ledas* suponuoja ramybę, tvirtumą ir paslaptингumą, t. y. ypatybes, kurias svahilių vyrai sieja su romantiškais santykiais. Galiausiai, kalbant apie mylimą žmogų kaip apie medų, išreiškiamos saldumo, prisirišimo ir maisto ypatybės, simbolizuojančios romantiškų santykų teikiamą šilumą ir pastovumą. Kiekviena metafora ir atitinkami konceptų žemėlapiai atspindi kultūrines vertėbes ir emocinį gylį, kurį šie jaunuoliai priskiria meilei ir meilės santykiams, vaizduodami savo mylimąsias kaip puoselėjamas, grakščias ir žaviai svarbias jų gyvenimo figūras. Taigi šis metaforų tyrimas pabrėžia stiprų perkeltinės kalbos poveikį išreiškiant sudėtingus meilės jausmus ir atskleidžia kultūriniu požiūriu pagrįstą Mombasos svahilių jaunuolių romantikos perspektyvą.

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