



Semantic Analysis of Swahili Action Verb “To cut”: A Natural Semantic Metalanguage Approach

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Abstract: This research paper aims to analyze the Swahili action verb “to cut” within the framework of Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) theory. The study also seeks to identify other Swahili verbs that share similar semantic correlations. No research has been conducted on the verb “to cut” using the NSM model in Swahili. Therefore, this research is crucial in bridging the gap in the existing literature. Swahili holds a significant position as one of the official languages in Kenya, alongside English, making it prevalent in the region. To achieve the research objectives, a qualitative-descriptive research design methodology was employed. Native Swahili speakers were involved in the study, and selected texts were utilized as data sources. Through self-examination and careful analysis, a total of 22 Swahili verbs were identified to have comparable semantic correlates to the verb “to cut.” These verbs include *kata*, *tahirisha*, *pogoa*, *tema*, *katisha*, *nyofoa*, *chuna*, *vunja*, *kuhasiwa*, *tenganisha*, *nyoa*, *keketa*, *chanja*, *punguza*, *fyeka*, *pasua*, *chana*, *chinja*, *katika*, *gawanya*, *chomoa*, and *ng’oa*. The findings of this study reveal that the Swahili word for “cutting” is derived from the original meaning of “doing” or “happening.” In this context, X represents the agent, Y represents the patient, and Z represents the instrument used in the action of cutting. By exploring the semantic relationships of the verb “to cut” and identifying other verbs that share similar patterns, this research sheds light on the versatility and richness of the Swahili language verbs.

Keywords: Swahili language, Natural Semantic Metalanguage theory, Action verbs, Semantic correlates

1. Introduction

Along with English, Swahili is one of the most extensively used languages in Africa and one of Kenya’s official languages. East African people commonly associate their identity with Swahili (Wahome, Subiyanto, & Chandra, 2023). The language policy has undergone several changes since 1963, aligning with suggestions made by different government-formed commissions. These commissions advocated for a trilingual education system, proposing the use of African languages in non-formal communication in areas where they were predominantly spoken while suggesting Swahili and English for urban settings (Barasa, 2016). The Swahili action verb “to cut” is frequently used, although Anna Wierzbicka’s Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) theory has not been used to study it extensively. Wierzbicka pioneered the introduction of the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) as a cross-linguistic research framework with a focus on semantics. In her work, she delved into NSM’s theoretical foundations and methodology, demonstrating its effectiveness in exploring semantic structures across diverse languages and revealing universal elements (Wierzbicka, 1996). Wierzbicka and her colleagues have created a highly beneficial theoretical and methodological framework for semantic analysis across diverse linguistic and non-linguistic domains with the development of the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) model (Durst, 2003).

By examining the Swahili action verb “to cut” and locating other verbs that share the same semantic links, this study seeks to close this knowledge gap. This study’s major goal is to use the NSM theory to analyze the Swahili action verb “to cut” and find other Swahili verbs that have similar semantic links. Additionally, the study intends to demonstrate the richness and diversity of the Swahili language by shedding light on the semantic links between Swahili verbs. Swahili language, marked by its profound historical roots and cultural importance, stands as a vivid representation of East Africa’s linguistic richness. This language has consistently fascinated linguists, language



aficionados, and cultural enthusiasts, captivating their interest remains a linguistic marvel, playing a pivotal role in communication and shaping the identity of millions in the region (Wahome, 2023). The ability to use language is a key factor contributing to social mobility (Michieka, 2005). Linguistic proficiency plays a crucial role in individuals' upward movement within social strata, highlighting the importance of effective communication skills in facilitating improved social and economic opportunities.

While verbs inherently play a pivotal role in sentence construction, fostering coherence and unity in formal writing (Burgess et al., 1998), there remains a noticeable gap in the exploration of Swahili through the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) framework. Despite the language's widespread use, the application of NSM in Swahili studies has been limited, particularly concerning the analysis of verbs.

This void in research becomes particularly significant given the prevalence of Swahili and the extensive analysis it has undergone through Goddard's semantic template (2010). The framework, designed for a universal understanding of words and built on 65 semantic primes combining into complex semantic molecules (Goddard, 2008), offers a potent tool for dissecting the intricacies of Swahili verbs. NSM helps decode meanings across linguistic boundaries.

The human mind easily understands primitive concepts (Goddard & Wierzbicka, 2008). NSM Approach explains the lexical semantics of Swahili verbs in detail. Universal semantic primes were developed under the NSM Program (Goddard, 2008). Lexical polysemy is the ability of an exponent to have multiple connected meanings. Semantic primes are a type of conceptual syntax that appears in many languages (Goddard, 2008). Semantic molecules demonstrate the semantic interdependence of ideas. NSM can analyze Swahili words in-depth.

The study is situated within the field of linguistic research and focuses on the analysis of Swahili verbs using the NSM theory. The joining of clauses in writing and speaking is not haphazard but logical (Wakarindi, Mwangi, & Njoroge, 2022). The NSM theory is a linguistic framework that seeks to identify the universal semantic primitives that underlie all human languages. By applying this theory to the Swahili language, the study seeks to contribute to understanding the semantic relationships of Swahili verbs.

Numerous researchers have used the NSM theory in their research, demonstrating that it is a topic of interest to other researchers in different linguistic contexts. Some of the researchers who have used the NSM theory in their studies include but are not limited to (Gichohi & Subiyanto, 2022) who used it to compare Kikuyu proverbs with their English equivalents, and (Wardana & Mulyadi, 2022) who studied how Indonesians perceive colors, among others.

Previous research employing the Natural Semantic Metalanguage theory has been done on a variety of verbs. The following is a list of some verb-focused researchers' contributions. The study of Swahili verbs, particularly *kata* 'to cut', can benefit from a comparative analysis with research conducted on other languages using the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) theory. A good place to start is 'The Verb "to cut" in Nias Middle Dialect: The Study of Natural Semantic Metalanguage' (Ndruru, Budiarta & Kasni, 2021). The goal of this study was to identify verbs that are semantically connected to the verb "to cut" and to explain those verbs' meanings using the Natural Semantic Metalanguage theory. It was discovered that the word "to cut" was connected to 47 other verbs in the Nias Middle dialect. Swahili's *kata* 'to cut' exhibit similar semantic richness, showcasing connections to various verbs in Nias Middle dialect. Bahri (2020) analyzed cutting and breaking in Arabic using NSM, proposing a taxonomy of these actions. The study showed that cultural scripts can affect the semantics of these actions across different languages.

A different investigation was carried out (Gaudensiana & Budiarta, 2018). The Natural Semantic Metalanguage technique was used by the researchers to examine the verb *Mait*, which means "to take," in Dawan. According to the study, *mait*, which means "to take," has semantic significance in addition to the other 14 verbs. Thirdly, the researchers (Gunias, Menggo & Jem, 2021) carried out research that was based on the Manggaraian language and the idea of eating. The study aimed to clarify the meaning of the verb "to eat" in this language and compare it to other verbs that signify eating. The study's findings demonstrated that specific body parts and instruments are included in the verbs used to describe the action and process of eating. In addition, The Balinese Emotion Lexicons were studied by (Sudipa, 2002). The study focused on the use of emotions to examine Balinese lexicons. The study's findings showed that the lexicons may both describe positive and negative events. Kacprzak (2019) used NSM to study the meaning of Polish verbs related to cutting, finding that they could be analyzed using the primes of "cutting", "separation", and "edge".



Additionally, two researchers looked into the structure and semantics of the Javanese verb "to cut" (Syifa & Subiyanto, 2022). The study aimed to identify lexicons with meanings similar to the verb "to cut" and analyze them according to the Natural Semantic Metalanguage theory. The analysis's findings revealed that the verb "to cut" was covered by 12 different lexicons in Javanese. Additionally, (Noviafni & Jufrizal, 2022) investigated the meaning of the *Didan* word used in the Dari language. This study used a natural semantic metalanguage technique to examine words in Dari that share similar semantic primes. According to the study's findings, the verb "see" is related to 11 different words. Goddard (2018) developed a typology of cutting and slicing in NSM, showing that it can inform language and cognition research. Wierzbicka (2018) examined the cultural scripts and semantics of cutting and slicing, demonstrating the influence of cultural scripts on meaning. Bower and Zanuttini (2018) explored cutting and breaking in Nyulnyulan languages, revealing differences in patterns of description. Gladkova (2018) analyzed cutting and breaking in Russian, finding that cultural scripts influence the semantics of these actions.

Tang and Dingemans (2021) studied cutting and breaking in Mandarin Chinese, finding that cultural scripts affect their meaning. Zima (2021) analyzed cutting and slicing in Polish, showing that cultural scripts also influence their semantics. Kulikov (2020) explored cutting and splitting in Altaic languages, revealing the impact of both cultural and geographical factors on their semantics.

The main theory used to analyze the Swahili verb "to cut" was NSM. However, other earlier research that was pertinent to the theory of Natural Semantic Metalanguage was used. We briefly discuss NSM. Two linguists, Goddard (2002) and Wierzbicka (1996), are given credit for the NSM approach. The NSM theory seeks to infer meanings that many linguists have said are challenging to decipher by searching for universal semantics or meanings of words (Goddard, 2008). There are some meanings that are innate and are typically referred to as primordial meanings. Goddard also created semantic templates for this idea, which are then applied to various verb kinds during explication. He developed a four-part semantic template for the explanation of verbs for physical activity. The NSM theory employs 65 semantic primes.

Despite the prevalence of the Swahili language, there has been no research on the Swahili action verb "to cut" using Anna Wierzbicka's NSM theory. It can be seen that the NSM theory was used to explain many verbs in the earlier studies carried out by various scholars. However, no study has been done using the NSM theory and the Swahili language on the Swahili verb "to cut." The NSM theory will be used in this study to analyze the Swahili verb "to cut," which has never been done before by a Swahili-speaking researcher or any other research scholar. Because of this, the earlier research mentioned above only examines the verbs "to cut," "to take," and "to eat" in other languages, not the Swahili language. This serves as the foundation for the research paper's uniqueness.

This research gap highlights the need for a study that analyzes the Swahili verb "to cut" and its semantic relationships using the NSM theory. This research paper will attempt to answer the following research questions:

- a) What are the semantic correlates of the Swahili action verb "to cut"?
- b) How do these semantic relationships compare to other Swahili verbs that share similar semantic relationships?
- c) What is the significance of identifying other Swahili verbs that share the same semantic relationships as the verb "to cut" in terms of highlighting the versatility and richness of the Swahili language?

2. Methods

This study employs a qualitative-descriptive approach to gather and analyze data, focusing on exploring the semantic relationships of Swahili action verbs. The research aims to provide insights into the verb "to cut" through primary and secondary data analysis.

2.1 Research Design

The qualitative-descriptive approach was chosen as it allows for in-depth exploration and description of the semantic relationships associated with the chosen verb. This approach aligns with the research objectives of understanding the nuances and variations in the meaning and usage of Swahili action verbs.



2.2 Research Site and Participants

The research was conducted in Arusha, Tanzania, and Mombasa, Kenya. These locations were selected because they are regions where Swahili is frequently spoken on a daily basis, providing a rich linguistic context for data collection.

The participants in the study were five knowledgeable informants who were native speakers of the Swahili language. Three informants were selected from Arusha, Tanzania, and three informants from Mombasa, Kenya. The selection criteria for informants included factors such as age, linguistic proficiency, availability, oratory skills, and fluency. The researcher, who is a native speaker of Swahili, conducted the data collection process through self-reflection and intuition.

2.3 Data Collection

The data collection process involved the use of tools such as a tape recorder, notebooks, and pencils. The researcher conducted interviews with the informants, recording their responses and taking notes during the interviews. The data collection process included the identification and representation of relevant information provided by the informants, followed by the display and interpretation of the collected data.

2.4 Data Sources

The study utilized both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data was collected through interviews with knowledgeable informants. Secondary sources included relevant references such as "Swahili Verbs and Grammar Essentials" (Githiora, 2014) and "The 1200 Kiswahili Verbs" (Kasahorow, 2012). These secondary sources provided additional insights and references for the analysis of Swahili action verbs.

2.5 Data Analysis

The data analysis process was guided by Natural Semantic Metalanguage theory (Wierzbicka, 1996). The analysis involved several steps, including finding semantic primes, recognizing polysemy, comparing semantic features, and explication and paraphrasing. The chosen verb "to cut" served as the focal point for the analysis, with the researcher exploring and explaining its semantic relationships to other verbs based on the collected data.

2.6 Discussion and Explanation

The analytical description obtained from the data analysis was used in the discussion and explanation of the findings. The analysis of the semantic relationships of Swahili action verbs provided insights into the meaning, usage, and variations of these verbs, particularly in relation to the verb "to cut." The discussion summarized the key points and findings derived from the data analysis.

2.7 Flow Chart (Figure)

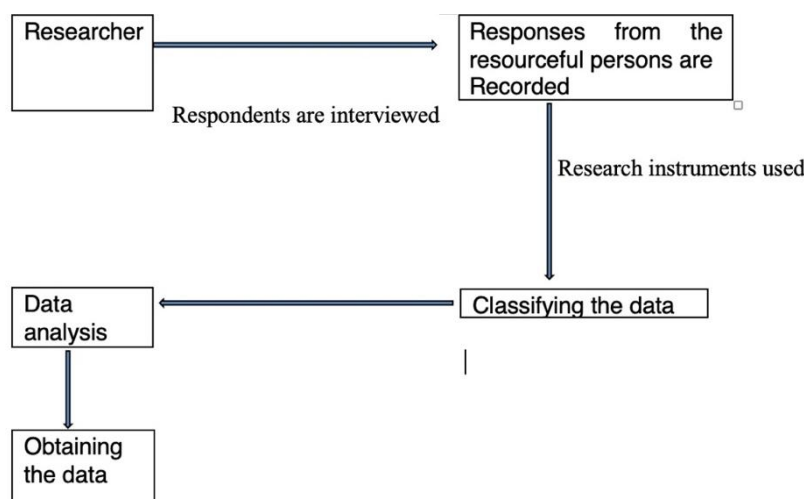


Figure 1 A flow chart showing the interviewing process

The provided figure below illustrates the interviewing process, highlighting the steps involved in obtaining and analyzing the data. It visually represents the progression from selecting informants, conducting interviews, recording responses, and analyzing the collected data through the classification process.

3. Results and Discussion

This study was conducted to characterize the Swahili action verb "to cut" and determine which Swahili verbs are semantically linked to it. The study examined the definitions of the verbs that were connected to the verb "to cut" as well. According to the information provided below, the meaning of the verb "to cut" depends on the context in which it is employed. It might entail employing sharp items or tools to separate, divide, or get rid of something, for instance. These Swahili lexicons *kata, tahirisha, pogo,tema, katisha, nyofoa, chuna, vunja, kuhasiwa, tanganisha, nyoa, keketa, chanja, punguza, fyeka, pasua, chana, chinja, katika, gawanya, chomoa, ng'oa* are related to the verb "to cut." The examination of the 22 lexicons was accomplished by identifying semantic primes, recognizing polysemy, contrasting semantic features, and paraphrasing and explication.

3.1 Identification of Semantic Primes

The meanings of lexical items reveal the existence of semantic primes (Goddard 2008, p. 5). They contend that semantic primes are equivalent across all human languages through the studies done by many scholars. A group of 65 semantic primes exists (Goddard, 2017). These inherent and indivisible components of meaning are irreducible (Wierzbicka, 1996). This is due to the fact that semantic primes are present in human cognitive systems and are found in all languages. The idea of completing an activity or a task is portrayed in the 22 lexicons of the Swahili language. The activities take place at a specific place. Someone is given a task to complete, the task is described, and the outcome of the task is discussed. As a result, the 22 lexicons' semantic primes are as follows.

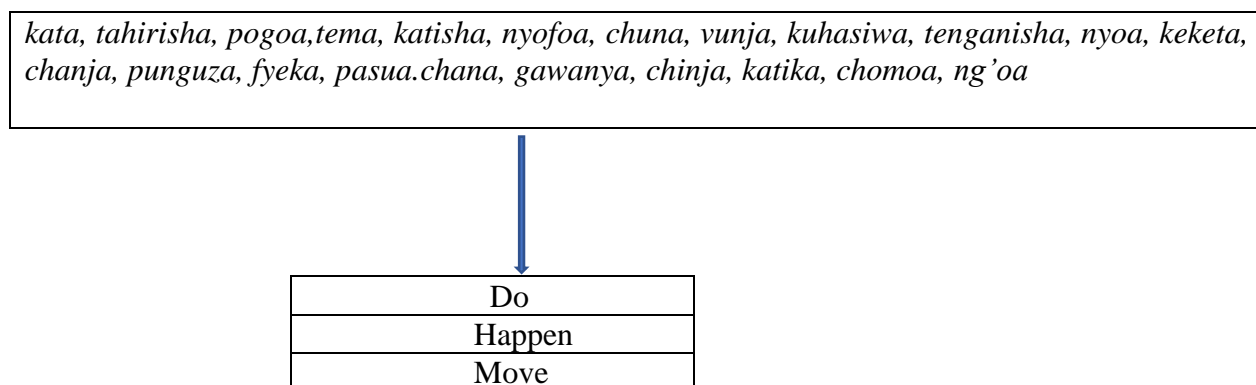


Figure 2 Semantic primes of the 22 Swahili lexicons semantically related to "cut"

3.2. Identification of Polysemy

When we discuss polysemy, we are referring to a single term with various connotations. Polysemy is positioned as a natural phenomenon of human language in the Natural Semantic Metalanguage approach. Since the theory of NSM recognizes the possibility that polysemy may be a cause of misunderstanding, ambiguity, or confusion, it has developed some tools to easily and precisely bring clarity and understanding of concepts. Natural semantic metalanguage clarifies the significance of combined semantic molecules to provide certain meanings.

Researchers who study the NSM scheme are aware that some of the semantic primes' exponents exhibit polysemy. 22 Swahili lexicons with cutting polysemy based on various objects are used in this study. As a result, the verb "to cut" in Swahili can refer to a variety of objects, including wood, garments, animals, people, plants, plastic, paper, and vegetables like broccoli and kale. This demonstrates the strong connection between lexemes and other words. The polysemy of SEE, THINK, DO, and HAPPEN is possible in the Swahili lexicons listed below. The translation of this is:

-Someone sees something, such as the object to be cut

- Someone considers how to cut the object
- Someone actually cuts the object
- The action is carried out utilizing some work tools

A type of singular lexicon in NSM called polysemy non-composition explains two separate semantic primes. In other words, since each exponent has a unique grammatical structure, there is no relationship between one exponent and the others (Sudipa and Widani, 2016: 130).

3.3 Comparison of Semantic Properties

The investigation of the additional semantic properties of the Swahili lexicons that were mentioned earlier will be our focus at this point. Semantic properties are the traits that provide more details about the meaning of words or concepts. These assist in distinguishing concepts and provide a framework for comprehending their connections to other words or concepts. Language understanding and effective communication are made possible by semantic properties. Semantic qualities include polysemy, homophones, synonyms, antonyms, hypernyms, and hyponyms.

The aforementioned verbs adhere to the S-V-O sentence structure, which states that the subject comes before the verb and the sentence's object. Swahili is a strongly agglutinative language. As a result, verbs might take on different inflections. The root verb *tenganisha*, which means to separate, is inflected to *tenganishwa*, which means to be separated, in example 10 above. It is also important to keep in mind that the verbs may change positions and appear in the initial position, as exemplified in example 15 acting as imperatives. For instance, *Fyeka nyasi yote* 'Slash all the grass'.

Table 1 Semantic properties of the 22 Swahili lexicons semantically related to "cut"

Swahili Verb	Semantic Properties
<i>kata</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cut using a knife -to sever -to reduce to small sizes -avoid something previously agreed on
<i>tahirisha</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -remove the outer part of the male genitalia -to cause something to be clean -to cleanse/purify something -cultural significance of the act
<i>pogoa</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -remove branches from a tree -secateurs cutting blades come close together -the cutting object is in close contact with the leaves
<i>tema</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -to discard or reject -to release or let go -to sift or filter something -to touch or feel
<i>katisha</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -break something into pieces -interrupt/stop something abruptly -to end a contract/relationship -cut using sharp objects
<i>nyofoa</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -to cut entirely the genitalia -lack of permission to do something -the action is done secretly -the action is illicit
<i>chuna</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -scraping/scratching something -removal of layers of materials -performance entails various levels of intensity depending on the sharpness of objects



	-implies a specific direction of movement
<i>vunja</i>	-to smash/break something -forceful action resulting in breaking -physical impact causing damage to objects -the action is intentional, not accidental -objects broken mostly cannot be restored
<i>kuhasiwa</i>	-to circumcise -it refers to the male circumcision of animals -on transitivity, it has no direct object
<i>tenganisha</i>	-to divide or separate -physical separation of entities -somebody is actively involved in the division process -it's done purposefully in mind -creation of two distinct entities
<i>nyoa</i>	-cutting hair/fur from a person or animal's body -use of sharp tools in the shaving process -a volitional action is done by the agent -the action of shaving is carried out until the targeted hair is removed
<i>keketa</i>	-the removal of the clitoris -action is performed on females -it involves the mutilation of the female body
<i>chanja</i>	-to separate or divide -screening something or someone -to clean or purify -vaccinate -filtering or straining something
<i>punguza</i>	-the action of reducing something -indicates the degree to which something is reduced -has contextual variations -indicates causation -requires an object to complete its meaning
<i>fyeka</i>	-to slash a lawn/field etc. -using sharp tools like a slasher to perform the action -moving grass in a particular direction -shows a complete or finished action-surface acted upon must be clean
<i>pasua</i>	-break into pieces -the action done is intentional -it has concrete meaning-refers to a tangible action -there is a change in the object being split
<i>chana</i>	-separate into smaller parts -requires an object to act upon -implies a deliberate action -can be used in a repetitive sense to indicate splitting
<i>chinja</i>	-to slaughter or sacrifice -involves blood shedding for cultural reasons -has a ritualistic connotation -a purposeful action of killing
<i>katika</i>	-breaking an object -indicates disconnection -shows an incomplete action



	-detachment of an object from another
<i>chomoa</i>	-extraction/removal of something -removing people from a certain situation -the act of provoking -disentangle something
<i>ng'oa</i>	-removing something from the ground -forceful extraction -dislodging -oust/overthrow
<i>gawanya</i>	-dividing something into smaller parts -distribution/ sharing -separation of one thing from another -classification/categorization

Table 2 Swahili verbs semantically related to “cut”, their translations, and examples in sentences

No.	Swahili constructions	English Language
1	Rhoda ana <i>kata</i> sukuma akitumia kisu	Rhoda is cutting kales using a knife
2	Daktari ali <i>tahirisha</i> ndugu zangu	The doctor circumcised my brothers
3	Babangu ana <i>pogoa</i> mti wa kahawa	My father is pruning the coffee tree
4	Mtoto wake alim <i>tema</i> bila idhini	Her child cut off the ties without permission
5	Mwalimu ali <i>katisha</i> mkutano jana	The teacher ended the meeting yesterday
6	Huyo kijana alim <i>nyofoa</i> sehemu nyeti mwenzake kwa kisu	That boy slashed off the genitalia of his friend with a knife
7	Walienda waka <i>chuna</i> matunda kwa mti wa mapera	They went and picked fruits from the guava tree
8	Yusuf ali <i>vunja</i> kijiti kwa vipande	Yusuf broke the stick into small pieces
9	Ndume zote wali <i>hasiwa</i> jana	All oxen were castrated yesterday
10	Wali <i>tenganishwa</i> na wao	They were separated by them
11	Kinyozi alim <i>nyoa</i> kijana maskini	The barber shaved a poor boy
12	Ali <i>keketa</i> wasichana wote kwa kijiji	She mutilated all the ladies in the village
13	Ali <i>chanja</i> kuni kwa kutumia shoka	He split firewood with an axe
14	Msanii ali <i>punguza</i> matumizi yake	The artist cut down his expenses
15	<i>Fyeka</i> nyasi yote	Slash all the grass
16	Fundi wa mbao ali <i>pasua</i> mbao	The carpenter split the planks
17	Kakangu ana <i>chana</i> nyama	My brother is slicing/cutting the meat
18	Wana <i>chinja</i> wanyama wote	They are slaughtering all the animals
19	Kioo kime <i>katika</i>	The glass has broken
20	Nime <i>chomoa</i> maskio	I have extracted the ears
21	Nilim <i>ng'oa</i> meno	I extracted his teeth
22	Mamangu ali <i>gawanya</i> mkate vipande	My mother divided the bread into pieces

3.4. Paraphrasing and Explication

The table above shows 22 Swahili action verbs related to “cut”. Common challenges often arise when it comes to distinguishing between verb usage in languages (Wahome & Suharno, 2023). Bold and italics in the sentences above highlight verbs that semantically relate to cut. Paraphrasing restates text while keeping meaning, useful for summary, explanation, and avoiding plagiarism. Explication examines text to identify underlying ideas. Semantic template adheres to language pattern rules, enhancing comprehension. Lexico-syntactic frame maps lexical items and expressions, empirical findings form prototypical motivational scenario, consistent across languages. The “to cut” verb in Swahili indicates a preference for two things to divide. Semantic primes create the motivational scenario, manner structure shows how the action is carried out, the potential outcome predicts the final result, and connects the procedure with the prototype actor's motive.



4. Discussion

4.1 *kata*- 'cut'

This verb *kata* in this context means cutting into small pieces. The action becomes a success through the use of a cutting tool which is a sharp knife. The action can be performed on cabbages, spinaches, kale (sukuma wiki), broccoli, and other vegetables.

We can explicate the Swahili verb *kata* 'cut' as follows:

- X (Rhoda) does something to Y (kale)
- X does this with a knife
- X cuts Y into small pieces
- X also cuts Y's leaves into little pieces
- X continues to conduct the action of cutting until she achieves the desired kale sizes

In NSM model, *kata* is expressed as "X does something to Y," where X is the agent and Y is the subject/object being cut. *kata* involves X cutting any object with a sharp tool like a knife, emphasizing the action of cutting. It refers to a specific activity focused on a substance, shaping it or cutting it into smaller pieces.

The Swahili verb *kata* encompasses a versatile role, extending from communal to individual practices. Whether employed in group settings, where women collaborate in chopping vegetables, or in more personal contexts, such as dish preparation in initiation rites for young boys, the act of *kata* with a sharp knife remains culturally significant. This flexibility in application highlights the diverse ways in which *kata* is woven into both communal and individual aspects of Swahili-speaking communities.

4.2 *tahirisha*- 'circumcise'

This Swahili verb means the action of removing an outward foreskin in male humans' penises. The process is achieved through the use of a pair of scissors, sharp razor blades, or knives. The performer of the action is the circumciser.

- X (the circumciser) affects Y in some way
- Y are Male humans
- X performs with a pair of razor-sharp scissors
- X carefully executes the action
- Y's foreskin is not where it was before moving on to the next stage

Regarding circumcision, NSM interprets *tahirisha* as "X does something to Y," where X is the agent and Y is the recipient. In this context, X performs the circumcision on Y, emphasizing the purifying effect. Moreover, *tahirisha* refers to an action targeting a specific person and involves cleaning the area using a procedure or material like washing or antiseptics to prevent complications or infections.

Male circumcision holds significant cultural and religious importance, serving as a rite of passage in many Swahili speaking communities. In Swahili-speaking cultures like the Luo, traditional practices involved removing six lower teeth, but the impact of HIV/AIDS awareness has led to a shift towards safer methods like penises' foreskin circumcision. Religiously, Muslims typically perform circumcision on the eighth day of a boy's life, while Christians often do it after junior primary or based on medical considerations. The practice has evolved over time, reflecting adaptations to changing health perspectives and cultural norms within diverse communities.

4.3 *pogoa*- 'prune'

It is worth noting that *pogoa* is a Swahili verb that entails cutting unwanted branches or leaves on trees. The branches/leaves may be overgrown or growing in a direction they are not wanted. This is achieved by the use of secateurs by farmers with pruning know-how.

- X alters Y in some way
- X does something with Y's leaves and branches
- Y is a coffee tree



This is accomplished by X using secateurs
 X repeatedly carries out the same action
 X performs the pruning with expertise
 Y's undesirable branches and leaves are removed
 The positions of Y's branches have changed from what they were previously

NSM expresses *pogoa* as "X does something to Y," where X trims or prunes an object and Y is the object being trimmed. It is prudent to reiterate that *pogoa* is about eliminating extra or undesirable parts, emphasizing X's treatment of Y. It involves using tools such as scissors or secateurs to trim or prune the substance to remove unwanted parts.

Pruning, commonly performed before rains and fruit-bearing seasons, improves air circulation, sunlight exposure, and nutrient distribution, resulting in increased fruit production. Beyond its utilitarian benefits, *pogoa* contributes to the aesthetic appeal of landscapes, especially when applied to hedges. This horticultural practice is essential for maintaining attractive, well-maintained environments and ensuring the overall vitality and sustainability of cultivated areas.

4.4 *tema*- 'to cut ties'

Swahili linguists acknowledge that *tema* is a Swahili verb meaning cutting ties with some people for various reasons. It may involve friends, relatives, or acquaintances. The explication of the verb is outlined below.

X does something to Y
 Y is a parent, and X uses his judgment in doing this
 X is not interested in being associated with Y
 Y is cut off from X, who is left alone without Y's bonds

NSM expresses *tema* as "X does something to Y," where X ends a relationship or connection and Y is the relationship or connection being ended. Hence, *tema* refers to X severing links, emphasizing the ending action. It involves ending friendships or business arrangements, among other connections, in response to a particular relationship or connection. In addition, *tema* is a certain type of action taken to end or sever a particular relationship or connection. The Swahili practice of *tema*, involving the severing of ties, leads to profound socio-emotional consequences such as children's suffering, depression, perceived community irresponsibility, fatherlessness, and the emergence of dysfunctional family structures, significantly impacting both individuals and community dynamics.

4.5 *katisha*- 'end something abruptly/ cut short'

This Swahili verb, *katisha*, means ending something abruptly or cutting it short. This means that the action has to be cut off. It can be a meeting, conference, class, lecture, or convention.

X causes some change to Y
 Y is a gathering/meeting
 X does it as a result of an unexpected call or circumstance
 Using his own initiative or authority, X does it
 Y has been terminated
 Y is no longer ongoing

The verb *katisha* can be translated into NSM as "X does something to Y," with X denoting the agent performing the action and Y denoting the subject or object being affected. In the case of *katisha*, X is the one who cuts short something, and Y is the thing or things that are being ended abruptly. So we can say that *katisha* refers to an X ending something. The cutting action that Agent X is performing on patient Y is what is being highlighted.

The abrupt ending of meetings, influenced by cultural and societal factors, is evident during elections with potential disruptions by goons and in Kenya during funerals, where inheritance disputes and legal claims by unrecognized relationships' profiteers, mostly women, lead to the sudden termination of burial proceedings. Alternatively, this situation may arise during wedding ceremonies, where one partner might assert that they have been deceived or misled by their spouse in different aspects of their relationship.



4.6 *nyofoa*- 'cut-off'

The Swahili verb *nyofoa* means to entirely cut the male genitalia. The action is prompted by actions like rape, or sheer acrimony. The action is achieved by the use of sharp objects like knives, scissors, or razor blades.

- X alters Y in some way
- Y is a human male
- X performs this with a knife
- X is not cautious
- The whole genitalia of Y are removed
- Y's genitalia are not located where they once were

NSM expresses *nyofoa* as "X does something to Y," where X is the agent removing the complete genitalia and Y is the patient undergoing the procedure. *nyofoa* is a specific action directed at a person, involving surgical equipment to remove the genitalia. The focus is on X removing Y's entire genitalia. The practice of *nyofoa*, involving complete male genitalia removal, has evolved in situations where individuals, especially women, feel entitled to financial support. Some resort to waiting for intoxicated men to assert perceived grievances, reflecting a concerning manifestation of interpersonal disputes within specific cultural or social dynamics.

4.7 *chuna*- 'pick/pluck from tree fruits'

This verb means picking/plucking fruits from fruit trees. This is mostly achieved using hands. The performer of the action may be skilled, semi-skilled, or unskilled. The explication is:

- X alters Y in some way
- Fruits from the fruit tree Y are subject to some action by X
- When doing this, X uses their hands
- This is repeated by X until the required fruits are harvested
- The location of Y's fruits has changed from when they first appeared

NSM expresses *chuna* as "X does something to Y," where X picks or plucks something and Y is the object being changed. Therefore, *chuna* is about X picking or plucking anything, such as fruits or tree bark, emphasizing the action on Y. It involves using hands or a peeler to remove the object's outer layer or plucking fruits from trees. The fruits picked contribute to local economies and celebrations as people, communities interact during this event.

4.8 *vunja*- 'break into pieces'

This verb means breaking objects into small pieces. The entities are broken using hands and legs. The entities are usually not strong beyond human might. The explication is outlined below

- X alters Y in some way
- Y is a stick
- Using his hands and legs, X performs this
- Y is fragmented into tiny fragments
- X repeats this action
- Y is not in the same condition as it was earlier

NSM expresses *vunja* as "X does something to Y," where X breaks or smashes something and Y is the object being treated. *vunja* refers to X shattering or breaking something like wood or glass, emphasizing the action on Y. It involves using force to break or smash the object into pieces with a knee, hammer, or rock. The act of *vunja* holds symbolic meanings that may imply anger, strength, or ability. The breaking of objects carries cultural significance, representing emotions or demonstrating power within traditional practices or ceremonies.

4.9 *kuhasiwa*- 'castrate'

This verb means cutting some parts of male animals' genitalia which involves the testicles. The action is achieved by using burdizzos, scissors, sharp knives, or razor blades.



X does something to Y
 Y is a male animal
 Y is in discomfort
 X brutally executes the action while using a burdizzo
 Y's genitalia have some cuts in them
 The testicles of Y are removed
 Y's testicles are not where they were previously

In NSM, *kuhasiwa* for animal circumcision is "X does something to Y," where X removes the animal's genitalia and Y is the animal being subjected to the procedure. Therefore, *kuhasiwa* refers to X carrying out the procedure to remove the testicles, emphasizing the action on Y. It involves using a sharp object like a razor or knife to remove the animal's genitalia, targeting a specific animal. Castrating animals in husbandry holds practical benefits, making them docile, reducing aggression, minimizing trespassing, and contributing to enhanced meat quality, especially in animals like oxen.

4.10 *tenganisha*- 'separate'

This verb describes the action of cutting by separating two entities. The entities may involve human beings, animals, or objects. The explication is as outlined below.

X does something to Y
 Y feel bad and deceived
 Y is an individual
 X pulls this off deftly
 Y is cut off from a pal
 Y has parted ways with a pal

NSM expresses *tenganisha* as "X does something to Y," where X separates or divides something into parts and Y is the object being treated. Therefore, *tenganisha* refers to X dividing something like paper or cloth into sections, emphasizing the action on Y. It involves using a tool like scissors or a knife to cut and separate the object into distinct parts, focusing on a particular substance or object. In conflict resolution, *tenganisha* facilitates minimal injuries and promotes peace.

4.11 *nyoa*- 'shave'

This verb entails cutting the hair of humans. The barber or the person shaving a person uses a shaving machine, razor blade, or a pair of scissors.

X does something to Y
 Y is an individual
 X uses a shaving machine to perform this
 X repeats the procedure carefully and numerous times
 Y has her hair cut short or shaven
 Y's hair has changed from how it was in the past

NSM expresses *nyoa* as "X does something to Y," where X cuts or trims something, and Y is the object being treated. Thus, *nyoa* refers to X cutting or trimming something like hair, emphasizing the action on Y. It involves using a tool like scissors or a shaving machine to remove or trim unwanted parts, focusing on a particular substance or object. In some Swahili communities, the verb *nyoa* holds cultural significance, symbolizing mourning in some communities when shaving clean after losing a loved one. Additionally, it is associated with cleanliness and formality in various contexts.

4.12 *keketa*- 'mutilate a female genitalia'

This verb involves cutting/mutilating human female genitalia (clitoridectomy/ clitorectomy). It is done using sharp razors, knives, or a pair of scissors. The explication is given below.



X does something to Y
 Y is a female human
 X uses razor blades to carry out the action
 X does the move with caution
 Y has some of her genitalia removed
 Y's genitalia have changed since previously

NSM expresses *keketa* for female circumcision as "X does something to Y," where X removes the clitoris and Y is the person being circumcised. Thus, *keketa* refers to X performing the procedure to remove the clitoris, emphasizing the action on Y. It involves using a razor or other sharp object to remove the clitoris, targeting a specific female. Also, *keketa*, traditionally a form of female circumcision, was initiated by women to reduce female sexual desires in Swahili communities. However, it is now considered archaic, with health risks leading to fatalities during childbirth and the procedure.

4.13 *chanja*- 'split'

This verb involves cutting/splitting firewood. The cutting may involve logs or firewood. This is achieved by using an axe.

X alters Y in some way.
 Y is kindling
 Y is broken up into little parts
 X repeats the action of cutting severally
 Y is no longer in the same shape as it was previously.

NSM expresses *chanja* for cutting as "X does something to Y," where X slices or chops something into smaller pieces and Y is the object being treated. Hence, *chanja* refers to X cutting something like firewood into smaller pieces, emphasizing the action on Y. It involves using an axe or other tool to cut the object or material into smaller pieces, focusing on a particular substance or object. It is worth noting that *chanja* is culturally associated with men in most Swahili speaking communities.

4.14 *punguza*- 'cut down the expenses'

This verb means cutting down the expenditure. The entity involves goods and services and in most cases it involves money.

X alters Y in some way
 Y are goods
 Y's price is expensive
 X is paying for this with money
 X performs this multiple times
 Y no longer depletes X's savings

NSM expresses *punguza* for cutting down expenditure as "X does something to Y," where X reduces the size or amount of something, and Y is the object being treated. So, *punguza* refers to X decreasing the size or amount of a specific product or substance, emphasizing the action on Y. It involves using money to lower the size or amount of the object, focusing on a particular substance or object. Furthermore, *punguza* is linked to financial independence, and its application implies a reduction in expenses, fostering improved financial stability and autonomy. This practice reflects a pragmatic approach to managing resources and underscores the evolving economic perspectives within Swahili communities.

4.15 *fyeka*- 'slash/ cut the grass'

This verb means cutting/slashing grasses in lawns. The entity is grass. The action is done using a slasher.

X alters Y in some way
 Y is grass



X uses a slasher to do this
 Y's stalks and leaves are chopped into the desired sizes
 X consistently carries out the action
 Y's size and shape are different

NSM expresses *fyeka* as "X does something to Y," where X slashes or cleans something, and Y is the object being treated. Thus, *fyeka* refers to X mowing grass or mopping a floor, emphasizing the action on Y. It involves using a tool like a slasher to cut or clean the object or surface, targeting a specific substance or object. In Swahili culture, *fyeka* signifies the need for a serene environment, with communal slashing potentially indicating the expectation of guests.

4.16 *pasua*- 'split/cut into pieces'

This verb means cutting or splitting planks. The cutting involves wood/timber. The action is done using an axe. The explication is given below.

X alters Y in some way.
 Y is on level ground
 Y is planks
 X uses an axe to carry out this
 Until the desired sizes are achieved, X repeatedly repeats the action
 Y is not the same as it once was

NSM expresses *pasua* as "X does something to Y," where X splits or divides something, and Y is the object being treated. Therefore, *pasua* refers to X separating or dividing something into two or more pieces, emphasizing the action on Y. It can be applied to objects like wood or ideas, focusing on a particular substance or object. Also, *pasua* is associated with the continuity of woodworks, contributing to the creation of functional furniture.

4.17 *chana*- 'to slice or cut into small pieces'

The Swahili verb *chana* means 'to carve' or 'cut into thin slices.' When preparing meals, such as slicing meat or vegetables, it is frequently utilized. Knives or mandolin slicers are the typical tools used for this activity.

X does something to Y
 Y is a bread
 X uses a knife to slice Y
 Y repeats the action until desired slices are obtained
 Y is not as it was before

NSM expresses *chana* as "X does something to Y," where X chops or slices something into pieces, and Y is the object being treated. Therefore, *chana* refers to X cutting or carving anything into small pieces, emphasizing the action of Y. It can be applied to objects like meat, wood, fruits, and vegetables, focusing on a particular substance or object. To add to this, *chana* adds a festive touch during celebrations, festivities, and acts of appreciation, especially within the culinary domain.

4.18 *chinja*- 'to slaughter an animal'

This verb is often used in the context of meat preparation, where a specific method of slaughtering is followed. The tool commonly used for this task is a sharp knife.

X alters Y in some way
 Y is an animal on a level ground/hanging
 X uses a knife to slaughter Y
 Y is no longer living as it was before

NSM expresses *chinja* as "X does something to Y," where X kills something, and Y is the subject, like an animal. Thus, *chinja* refers to X slaughtering an animal like a goat or cow, emphasizing the action on Y. The animal,



Y, is being killed by Agent X, focusing on a particular subject or object. Moreover, *chinja* may connote cultural sacrifices of animals, either as offerings to supernatural beings for appeasement or as part of festive celebrations.

4.19 *katika*- 'to break or to snap'

It is often used in the context of physical objects that can be broken, such as branches, bones, or electronic devices. The tool involved in this task depends on the object being broken but can include a saw, scissors, or pliers.

X does something to Y
Y is a tree branch
X uses a saw to break Y
Y is totally broken

NSM expresses *katika* as "X causes Y to break or disconnect," where X is the reason for the breakage or disconnection of Y. Therefore, *katika* refers to X leading to the breaking or discontinuation of Y, emphasizing the outcome of the action. It can be applied to objects like a tree branch breaking due to strong winds or a phone conversation ending due to poor signal quality, focusing on a particular subject or object. Also, *katika* may signify broken body parts, possibly associated with curses, bad omens, or practices related to witchcraft or voodoo in certain cultural contexts.

4.20 *gawanya*- 'to divide or distribute'

It is often used in the context of sharing or allocating resources, such as food or money. The tool involved in this task can be anything from a knife for cutting food to a calculator for dividing up money.

X does something to Y
Y is food
X uses a knife to break Y
Y is broken down into small pieces
Y is not as it was before

NSM expresses *gawanya* as "X divides or separates Y into parts or pieces," where X is the performing agent and Y is the object being divided or separated. So, *gawanya* refers to X splitting or separating Y into parts or pieces, emphasizing the action on Y. It can be applied to objects like cutting a cake into slices or dividing a crowd of people into smaller groups, focusing on a particular substance or object. Also, *gawanya* may culturally involve the division of resources, such as land. Traditionally, land allocation favored male family members, reflecting gender-based divisions in Swahili speaking communities. In festive occasions, specific animal organs were reserved for males in certain Swahili communities.

4.21 *chomoa*- 'to remove or extract'

It is often used in the context of removing something that is stuck or lodged somewhere, such as a splinter or a key from a lock. The tool commonly used for this task is a pair of tweezers or pliers.

X does something to Y
Y is a key
X uses force to extract Y
Y is entirely removed
Y is not in the place it was before

NSM expresses *chomoa* for cutting as "X removes Y from Z," where X is the agent performing the action, Y is the item being removed, and Z is the source or place where Y is located. Therefore, *chomoa* refers to X removing Y from Z, emphasizing the action on Y. It can be applied to objects like removing a tooth from the mouth or a nail from a piece of wood, focusing on a particular substance or object. Surprisingly, *chomoa* can lead to a life-saving situation of someone by removing things that are blocked and are a threat to peoples' safety.



4.22 *ng'oa* 'to uproot or remove by force'

It is often used in the context of removing something firmly attached or embedded in the ground, such as a tree or a fence post. The tool commonly used for this task is a shovel or an axe.

X does something to Y

Y is a tooth

X uses force to extract Y

Y is entirely removed

Y is not in the place it was before

NSM expresses *ng'oa* as "X removes Y from Z," where X is the agent performing the action, Y is the thing being forcibly removed, and Z is the place or source where Y is located. Thus, *ng'oa* refers to X forcibly removing Y from Z, emphasizing the forcefulness of the action. It can be applied to objects like extracting a tooth or uprooting a plant, focusing on a particular substance or object. This holds implications in agriculture, contributing to increased food crop production and shaping the landscape for improved agricultural outcomes.

5. Conclusion

The Swahili verb "to cut" was analyzed in this research paper and found to be semantically linked to 22 other Swahili verbs. Swahili verbs follow the S-V-O sentence pattern, and cutting techniques appear to be frequently used in Swahili speakers' daily lives. The Goddard four-part semantic template was used to explicate the Swahili verbs, and it revealed that the word for "cutting" is derived from the original meaning of "doing" or "happening," with an agent, patient, and instrument. This type of analysis helps to shed light on the underlying structure and meaning of words, which can be useful for language learning and teaching. NSM theory offers a means of obtaining cross-linguistic understanding and examining the cognitive mechanisms behind language use and comprehension. It also provides a framework for teaching language in a cognitively meaningful way.

I would like to make the following recommendations:

- a) Scholars should use NSM theory to study verbs in other African languages, particularly Cushitic, Nilotic, and other Bantu languages.
- b) NSM theory can also be used to analyze proverbs and other forms of language use in these languages.
- c) The NSM scheme can be applied to language learning and instruction to teach language in a cognitively meaningful way.

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Yes

Conflict of interest

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