

## The Cognitive Motivation for the Use of Metonymy in Kuria and Iraqw Personal Names

*Nicholous Asheli\**

### **Abstract**

*It has been commonly held that metonymy is an aspect of literary works; acting as figures of speech. There are scholars who consider metonymy to be a technique that is employed by someone experienced in literary works. In Cognitive Linguistics, however, metonymy is considered to be part of human cognition. That means people use metonymy without any effort because it is part of the mental function. They use it even without being aware that they are using it. This paper attempts to demonstrate the cognitive motivation for the prevalent use of metonymy in Kuria and Iraqw personal names. It is argued, in the paper, that common use of metonymy in the two languages' personal names demonstrates coincidental relationship between birth and place, circumstance and time. It is concluded that personal names in the two languages studied are bestowed based on some cognitive principles which name-givers may not be aware of but they use them because such principles are part of their cognition. It is also concluded that metonymy is as well governed by construal operations which also have a cognitive basis.*

**Key words:** *metonymy, personal names, cognition, cognitive linguistics*

### **Introduction**

It is the privilege of all human beings to have personal names. These names are bestowed based on some principles which vary from society to society and coincide yet in other societies. It is the concern of this paper to show the nature of metonymy as a set of cognitive principles used in name choice and assignment. To discuss and elucidate a variety of issues, reference is made to personal names among the Kuria and Iraqw. Before any further discussion is made, the terms *name*, *metonymy* and *cognition* are defined. Thereafter, the extent to which metonymy is used and the reasons why it is used in personal name assignment is dealt with.

Crystal (1997) defines a name as a word or phrase that identifies a specific person, place or thing. In this definition specificity seems to be an important aspect of a name. It is deemed important for a name to refer to a particular person, place or thing. This is logical because

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\* Assistant Lecturer, Department of Foreign Languages and Linguistics, University of Dar es Salaam, P.O. Box 35040, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, E-mail: niconjeza@hayoo.co.uk

when a name is given, it is given to a particular individual. However, in practice, different members of the society are likely to share a name. It is because of there being people who are named the same way in different societies, there are namesakes.

According to Akinola (2014), naming a child is as essential as having the child itself. Since naming is an essential process if a child is to be identified, the naming practices are worth studying. The interest of this paper is to highlight that naming is a principled linguistic activity. Since we want to argue that naming is a principled linguistic activity, variations are likely to be observed in different societies. Similarity may also be observed. Before further exploration is made, metonymy is briefly defined and described below.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 35), who are among the founders of Cognitive Linguistics (CL), define metonymy as the use of one entity to refer to another that is related to it. They give examples of metonymy to include:

- He likes to read the *Marquis de Sade*. (= the writings of the marquis)
- He's in *dance*. (= the dancing profession)
- *Acrylic* has taken over the art world. (= the use of acrylic paint)
- The *Times* hasn't arrived at the press conference yet. (= the reporter from the Times)

From the examples just given, it is clear that metonymy is to do with one entity standing for another entity to which it is related.

Unlike traditional rhetoricians who have been treating synecdoche as something distinct from metonymy, Lakoff and Johnson (ibid: 36) treat synecdoche, where part stands for the whole as part of metonymy. The two authors give the following examples as part of metonymy:

- The *automobile* is clogging our highways. (= the collection of automobiles)
- We need a couple of *strong bodies* for our team. (= strong people)
- There are a lot of *good heads* in the university. (= intelligent people)
- I've got a new *set of wheels*. (= car, motorcycle, etc)

In summary, what Lakoff and Johnson (ibid) are proposing is that metonymy is a 'stand for' kind of relationship in which one entity stands for another entity to which it is closely related. The authors give other instances of metonymy to include: producer for product

(e.g. He bought a *Ford*); object used for the user (e.g. The *buses* are on strike); controller for the controlled (*Nixon* bombed Hanoi); institution for people responsible (e.g. You'll never get the *university* to agree to that); the place for the institution (e.g. The *Whitehouse* isn't saying anything) and the place for the event (e.g. Let's not make Thailand become another *Vietnam*). In these cases, only parts of the examples have been quoted.

Ungerer and Schmid (1996: 114) confess that metonymy has been considered to be part of figures of speech. That means, metonymy has been regarded to be something found in literary works. These two scholars then argue that metonymy is part of everyday language and, more importantly, it is part of conceptual system. The scholars further argue that metonymy with metaphor are used as powerful cognitive tools for conceptualization of abstract categories. This generally means that metonymy is part of human cognition.

As if cementing on the idea of Ungerer and Schmid (*ibid*), Taylor (2003) offers two views of metonymy; the traditional view and the cognitive one. In the traditional view, Taylor (*ibid*: 124-125) says that metonymy is a figure of speech whereby the name of one entity  $e^1$  is used to refer to another entity  $e^2$ , which is congruous to, or which is associated with  $e^1$ . Justifying the possibility of transferred reference, Taylor (*ibid*) quotes Nunberg (1978) who treats the relationship between entities as a referring function of metonymy. Taylor continues to report that there is a referring function which permits the name of a container to refer to the contents of the container. Taylor then gives an example of *The kettle's boiling* to mean *the water in the kettle is boiling*. In this traditional view, Taylor gives other examples of metonymy which are principally like those given by Lakoff and Johnson (*op cit*). An important generalization made by Taylor about referring function is that any given instance of a referring function needs to be sanctioned by a body of knowledge and beliefs encapsulated in an appropriate frame. The author further says that the essence of metonymy resides in the possibility of establishing connections between entities which co-occur within a given conceptual frame.

Taylor (2003) then argues that the characterization of metonymy suggests a broader understanding than that given by traditional rhetoric. He further says that metonymy turns out to be one of the

most fundamental processes of meaning extension, which, in his view, is more basic than metaphor.

Taylor (*ibid*) makes a further exploration of the use of metonymy by raising very fundamental questions to include: “Why should a speaker choose to refer to  $e^2$  by using an expression whose basic meaning involves reference to  $e^1$ ? Why don’t speakers say what they mean? Why should they seemingly complicate matters by making statements which are at variance with their real intentions? What, in other words, is the cognitive motivation of metonymy?” This quest to know the cognitive basis of metonymy leads to the second view of metonymy; the cognitive side as proposed by Taylor.

The argument being made is that metonymy has a cognitive basis in that there are aspects of conceptualization that are more active in a conceptualization than others (cf Taylor, 2003:126). Lakoff and Johnson (1980) are also of the view that metonymy is part of conceptualization. Elucidating the concept of activeness in conceptualization, Taylor (2003) gives examples of various activities done to the car and what part of the car is active whenever a certain activity is involved in the conceptual system of people involved. The author says, when we ‘wash a car’, we have in mind the car’s exterior, not all the parts of the car; when ‘we vacuum-clean a car’ we highlight its upholstered interior; to ‘fill up a car’ is to fill up only the petrol tank; while ‘to service a car’ involves its mechanical parts. Explaining why it is possible for people to understand what is highlighted in each case, Taylor mentions the encyclopedic knowledge that people have about the entity concerned. In short, the argument being made here is that metonymy has cognitive basis. This begs the question about what cognition is.

According to Evans (2007), cognition is defined as something that relates to all aspects of conscious and unconscious mental function. She further says that in particular, cognition constitutes the mental events (mechanisms and processes) and knowledge involved in a whole host of tasks ranging from ‘low-level’ object perception to ‘high level’ decision-making tasks. This definition shows that cognition is to do with what takes place in people’s minds as they perceive various phenomena. In this paper, when we talk of cognitive basis, we mean something is a manifestation of mental processes. Based on the definition by Evans (*ibid*), cognition involves both conscious and subconscious mental function. This generally means that one does not have to know what metonymy is in order to use it. The

knowledge of using metonymy comes like the knowledge of other aspects of language. In other words, it is linguists who put language aspects into categories and not language users. Interestingly though, linguists base their categorization on how language users deploy their various linguistic resources as they communicate.

Giving some background, Guan (2009) reports that the research of metonymy has a history of more than two thousand years, and its study developed from traditional study of rhetorical research to modern cognitive research. The author goes on to argue that rhetoricians and linguists have taken it for granted for a long time that metonymy is a figurative language. Guan (ibid) says that metonymy operates on names of things and it involves the substitution of the name of one thing for that of another and the two things are somehow associated. This author generally supports the cognitive basis of metonymy where he reports that metonymy is a conceptual phenomenon; something cognitively driven.

In this paper it will be evident as to how the use of metonymy manifests itself in personal names among the Kuria and the Iraqw. An attempt will be made to explain why and how metonymy is used in personal names.

Since the same entity may use different kind of metonymy, Croft and Cruse's (2004) view of metonymy needs to be highlighted at this point. In their work, Croft and Cruse (2004) treat metonymy as part of construal operations in conceptualization. Basically, the crux of construal operations is Langacker's view of semantics, which, he says is conceptualization. In this line of thinking, meaning is attained by framing situations differently for different effects. Croft and Cruse (2004: 40) give instances of framing situations for different effects: *my dad* vs. *dad* vs. *father* and *waste time* vs. *spend time*. They argue that these examples show how one is related to one's father and whether the situation is looked at negatively or positively. That means the same situation can be expressed differently depending on how the speaker conceives the situation.

Croft and Cruse (ibid) also argue that framing is pervasive in language. It is then expected that naming practices involving the use of metonymy are likely to manifest a lot of construal operations. They are likely to manifest construal operations because name givers have to make choices out of several options available.

### Naming and Metonymy

Names are likely to make use of metonymy based on how they are chosen and bestowed. Names normally centre on one or the other domain. In most societies, personal names are given based on when, where and under what circumstances an individual was born (cf Agyekum, 2006 for Akan names). That being the case, personal names are likely to demonstrate metonymy as people find themselves named after things, events or places they were born in. So, basically, there is a 'stand for' kind of relationship as things that were associated with birth are the ones that feature in personal names. The following section presents and discusses personal names among the Kuria and the Iraqw in relation to metonymy.

### Metonymy in Kuria and Iraqw Personal Names

Based on the research carried out by the current author in 2015, it was found that the Kuria and the Iraqw name their children based on what transpires when a child is born. Based on construal operations, a child may have a name that shows the time/season of the year it was born. The following table contains names that show the time the child was born among the Kuria.

**Table 1: Temporonyms among the Kuria**

S/N	Name	Gender	Meaning/Comments
1	<i>Bhichichi</i>	M	It literally means 'villages'. It is a historical name given to people who were born in 1970's during the implementation of villagization policy in Tanzania which required people to build houses at places where they could be easily accessed by social services.
2	<i>Keraryo</i>	M	It means 'morning'. It is given to a male child born in the morning.
3	<i>Kiboso</i>	F	The name literally means 'dry season'. It is given to a female child born during the dry season.
4	<i>Maghesa</i>	M	It literally means 'harvest'. The name is given to a boy child who was born in the harvesting season.
5	<i>Matiku</i>	M	It literally means 'night'. It is given to a person who was born at night.
6	<i>Matinde</i>	F	It literally means 'crumbs'. It is given

S/N	Name	Gender	Meaning/Comments
			to a female child born during harrowing i.e. crumbs (matinde) are being broken into finer pieces ready for planting.
7	<i>Mbusiro</i>	F	It literally means 'sowing' or 'planting'. It is given to a female child born during the sowing season.
8	<i>Meremo</i>	M	It means 'work'. It is given to a child born in a busy season of the year when people had a lot of work to do.
9	<i>Monata</i>	M	It comes from the Kiswahili word 'mnada'. In Kiswahili 'mnada' means 'auction'. In most societies, 'mnada' is a name for an occasional market day. On that day, people market (auction) their goods. The name is given to a male child born on an occasional market day.
10	<i>Nchaghwa</i>	F	It literally means 'weed'. It is given to a female child born during the weeding period i.e. when weeds are being removed from the farm.

**Source:** Fieldwork, 2015

It is interesting to note that names in the table just seen talk about the part of the day or the season of year during which the name bearers were born. Based on these data, a person is given the name of the time/season of the year or part of the day that person was born. In other words, the person takes the name of what happened to be associated with his/her birth. So, names in this situation demonstrate a 'stand for' kind of relationship between birth and the time or season associated with that birth. Since a name identifies an individual, it is indicative that it is birth (one event in one's life) that comes to identify a person's entire life. That again is a 'stand for' relationship i.e. metonymy as part stands for the whole (cf Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Taylor, 2003).

In table 1, there are names that talk about parts of the day and those that talk about part of, or season of the year. The question one would ask is: What determines what a name will be, for example, if a child is born at night during the farming season or busy season of year?

What appears to be the case is the use of construal operations. Name givers will either name the child based on part of the day or season of the year depending on how they want to construe the birth of the child. If they think season of the year is all that matters, they will make it the name.

As hinted earlier on, metonymy is part of construal operations according to Croft and Cruse (2004). These authors specifically place metonymy under attention. They further place metonymy as part of selection. They define the latter as our ability to attend to parts of the experience that are relevant for the purpose at hand. So, name givers assign names based on metonymic principles of something standing for something else. They also employ construal operations by choosing what matters to them given the situation at hand. It should be reminded, here, that construal operations may be conscious or subconscious. Cruse (2011) emphasizes the notion of construal operation by saying that the processes result in conscious meaning but the processes themselves are unconscious. Based on that, we can, therefore, argue that name givers are guided by construal operations to make the choices they make. The operations come as automatic processes.

It is interesting to note that names based on time and season of birth are also found among the Iraqw. Table 2 illustrates this.

**Table 2: Temporonyms among the Iraqw**

11	<i>Amsi</i>	F & M	The name literally means ‘night at around 8 pm’. It is given to a child born at night before people go to sleep.
12	<i>Axweesoo</i>	M	The name literally means ‘night’. The name is given to a child who was born at night.
13	<i>Buhaaree</i>	F & M	The name means ‘rainy season’. It is given to a child born during the rainy season.
14	<i>Daafi</i>	F & M	The name generally means ‘the act of bringing cattle home after grazing’. This name is given to a child born at the time of bringing cattle home after grazing especially in the evening.
15	<i>Doomu</i>	F & M	The name refers to ‘continuous rain’. It is given to a child who was born during the long rainy season.

16	<i>Doosla</i>	F	It literally means ‘cultivation’. It is given as a name to a child born during cultivation/farming season.
17	<i>Giye</i>	M	The word means ‘famine’. It is given as a name of a child who was born during famine.
18	<i>Hheke</i>	F & M	The name literally means ‘fetch water’. It is given to a child born at the time someone was fetching water from the river.
19	<i>Matlee</i>	F & M	The name means ‘morning’. It is given to a child born in the morning.
20	<i>Qwarii</i>	M	The name literally means ‘famine’. It is given to a child who was born during the famine period.

**Source:** Fieldwork, 2015

The data from the table just presented show that metonymy is used in Iraqw personal names based on when a name bearer was born. Again, this community regards birth as an important happening in an individual’s life. We would use the same argument as the one we used for Kuria with regard to the fact that name givers profile birth to represent other stages of a person’s life. A name given based on when an individual was born identifies only one stage of the life of the name bearer. Other stages are backgrounded. That by itself is metonymy. It is metonymy when metonymy means part standing for the whole.

It can also be observed from the data that construal operations are employed with metonymy in this community because a person who is born say in the morning during the famine period is likely to be *Qwarii* (famine) or *Matlee* (morning). What determines the choice made by name givers is what they think matters at that particular moment. So, it is at the discretion of name givers to choose what to highlight and what to background. All the choice is processed in the mind of the people involved.

An interesting observation can be seen in the way the two communities split time. While the Iraqw have *Amsi* and *Axweessoo* both referring to night, the Kuria seem to have only *Matiku* referring to night. This is perhaps an area of departure between these two

communities. That may suggest that languages can hardly categorize the world exactly the same way.

There are also names that talk about prominent events that coincided with the birth of a child. Table 3 shows some names that talk about events that took place when the name bearer was born.

**Table 3: Circumstantial and Event Names among the Kuria**

S/N	Name	Gender	Meaning/Comments
21	<i>Enguti</i>	M	It literally means 'pigeon'. It is given to a male child whose birth was associated with the appearance of a pigeon at home or in the neighbourhood.
22	<i>Ghekondo</i>	F & M	It literally means 'monkey'. It is given to a child who was born when monkeys were around.
23	<i>Kirighiti</i>	M	It literally means 'earthquake'. It is given to a male child who was born when the earthquake occurred.
24	<i>Maghighe</i>	M	It means 'locusts'. It is given to a male child born when locusts invaded the village.
25	<i>Maghuru</i>	M	It literally means 'frozen rain drops'. The name is given to a male child who was born on the day hail occurred.
26	<i>Maghwaigha</i>	M	It literally means 'cobra'. It is given to a male child whose birth was accompanied by the appearance of a cobra at home.
27	<i>Masese</i>	M	It literally means 'dogs'. It is given to a male child who was born when there were many dogs around.
28	<i>Nkobha</i>	M	It means 'lightning' or 'of lightning'. It is given to a male child who was born when lightning occurred.
29	<i>Nyaichirichiri</i>	M	It means 'of drizzle'. It is given to a child born during drizzle.
30	<i>Nyambura</i>	F	It literally means 'of rain'. It is given to a female child born when heavy rain had fallen.

**Source:** Fieldwork, 2015

In the table just presented, personal names derived from events that took place at the time of birth can clearly be observed. Names that refer to rain, lightning and animals whose appearance coincided with the birth of the name bearers are shown. These names are metonymic because they show a 'stand for kind of relationship. In

this list of names, birth is highlighted and it is the one which the names stand for. Table 4 shows Iraqw personal names that are basically given in the same manner as is the case for Kuria names.

**Table 4: Circumstantial and Event Names among the Iraqw**

S/N	Name	Gender	Meaning/Comments
31	<i>A'amatl</i>	M	The word means 'with horns'. It is given as a name to a child who was born on a day an animal which has horns e.g. a buffalo had been killed in the village.
32	<i>Aamu</i>	M	The word means 'pumpkin'. The name is given to a child born when there happened to be many pumpkins.
33	<i>Araa</i>	M	The word literally means 'goat'. It is given as a name to a male child born on the day a goat was slaughtered or when goats happened to be around.
34	<i>Baasa</i>	M	The name literally means 'bushbuck'. It is given to a male child whose birth was associated with someone especially a father killing a bushbuck.
35	<i>Bahaa</i>	M	The name means 'hyena'. It is given to a male child who was born when a hyena appeared or was killed at home or in the neighbourhood. It is also given to a child whose preceding siblings died.
36	<i>Boay</i>	M	It literally means 'gathering'. It is given to a male child who was born when there was a crowd of people at home or in the neighbourhood normally during a ceremony.
37	<i>Bombot</i>	M	It means 'beer left over from the day before'. The name is given to a child born on the day people were drinking 'bombot' in the family or in the neighbourhood.
38	<i>Buura</i>	F & M	The name literally means 'beer'. It

S/N	Name	Gender	Meaning/Comments
			is given to a child born on the day there was beer at home or in the neighbourhood.
39	<i>Daangw</i>	M	It literally means 'elephant'. The name is given to a child whose birth coincided with the appearance of an elephant in the village.
40	<i>Kunsel</i>	M	This name literally means 'earthquake'. It is given to a child born after the earthquake had occurred.

**Source:** Fieldwork, 2015

The names among the Iraqw as presented in table 4 are principally given using the same principles as those for the Kuria. In both cases, some important events that coincide with birth are the ones that constitute names. The 'stand for' kind of relationship is still observed in both cases. The names basically represent the births of individuals. In this case, there is great likelihood that names given under the same principles and the same circumstances are synonymous despite belonging to different languages.

Table 5 presents names of different category to show whether they observe the same patterns as those observed by the previous lists.

**Table 5: Anthro-toponyms among the Kuria**

S/ N	Name	Gender	Meaning/Comments
41	<i>Ichinguku</i>	M	It means 'mountain'. The name is given to a child born around mountains.
42	<i>Kerasangi</i>	M	It refers to a black jack plant. It is given to a male child born in an area surrounded by black jack plants.
43	<i>Makobhe</i>	M	It means 'legumes'. It is given to a male child born near the legumes farm.
44	<i>Makonge</i>	M	It comes from the Kiswahili word 'mkonge' which means 'sisal'. It is given to a male child born at a place surrounded by sisal.
45	<i>Makuli</i>	M	It means 'cattle way'. It is given to a male child who was born on a cattle

S/ N	Name	Gender	Meaning/Comments
			way i.e. a place where cattle pass on their way to graze or on their way home after grazing.
46	<i>Manche</i>	M	It literally means 'water'. It is given to a child born near the river or anywhere else provided there is a lot of water around.
47	<i>Mang'eng'i</i>	M	It literally means 'salt mines'. It is bestowed to a male child who was born at the salt mines.
48	<i>Masaka</i>	M	It literally means 'bush'. It is given to a child born in the wilderness.
49	<i>Nyaghonchera</i>	F	It literally means 'of a path'. It is given to a female child who was born on the path or on the way. This is the case when a pregnant woman experiences labour on the way and bears the child right there. It was very common when there were no hospitals.
50	<i>Waisae</i>	F	It means 'of bush'. It is given to a female child born in the bush.

**Source:** Fieldwork, 2015

The place where one is born is among things that are likely to constitute a name among the Kuria. In table 5, names that refer to places such as path, bush, salt mines, cattle way, sisal tree, mountains and those talking about other places are plentifully used. The same pattern can be observed among the Iraqw as represented in table 6 below.

**Table 6: Anthro-toponyms among the Iraqw**

S/N		Gender	Meaning/Comments
51	<i>Ayto'o</i>	F & M	The name literally means 'maize'. The name is given to a child who was born in the maize farm or when the father was in the maize farm.
52	<i>Bambara</i>	F & M	The name literally means 'finger millet'. This name is given to a baby born in the finger millet farm or when the father was in the finger millet farm.
53	<i>Basoro</i>	F & M	It literally means 'sorghum'. It is given to a child who was born in the sorghum farm or when the father was in the sorghum.
54	<i>Bunqa</i>	F & M	The name literally refers to a muddy place. This name is given to a child born at a muddy place.
55	<i>Dareda</i>	F & M	This is basically a place name. There is a place known by that name in Babati. In that place there is a mission hospital. So, a child born at that hospital is likely to be given that name. During the research, it was reported that there are people called Dareda just because they were born at that hospital.
56	<i>Darma</i>	M	It refers to 'the large wilderness normally far from people's habitats'. The name is given to a child who was born in the wilderness or a child whose father happened to be in the wilderness at the time of birth.
57	<i>Imbori</i>	F & M	This name is the Iraqw version of the name Mbulu, which is the district name. The name is given to a child who was born in Mbulu town.
58	<i>Lohi</i>	F & M	The name literally means 'the way/path/road'. The name is given to a child born on the way. That is normally the case when a pregnant woman is being taken to hospital or when a woman was going somewhere and experienced labour pain on the way, which led to delivery.
59	<i>Tlawi</i>	F & M	The word literally means 'lake'. The name is given to a child who was born

S/N		Gender	Meaning/Comments
			near the lake or when the father was at the lake.
60	<i>Tsee'a</i>	F & M	The name means 'outside'. It is given to a child born outside the house.

**Source:** Fieldwork, 2015

The use of metonymy in this other category of names is clearly seen in both languages. There are cases when names talk about places of birth of an individual who is given a name. Like in other cases seen, metonymy manifests itself through the use of a place name to represent birth. Birth, in turn, is used to 'stand for' all other life stages one goes through. In other words, in these two languages, names define matters pertaining to the birth of name bearers. This is the case in many communities of the world. Among the Akan of Ghana, the use of this kind of names and others that describe birth in terms of place and other matters associated with birth is common (see Agyekum, 2006).

### **The Nature of Metonymy Used in the two Languages**

The data presented so far have shown that Kuria and Iraqw make use of metonymy in personal names quite plentifully. Metonymy is said to be used as one thing stands for another thing to which it is closely related. In all cases observed, it is clear that the domain being focused on is birth. What is obvious is that a name will tell a short story about where, when and under what circumstances an individual was born.

What is interesting is that, in each case, there are several options available for members of the communities involved to choose from. We have seen that names can talk about events, seasons of the year and places. However, it is construal operations that determine what will be chosen and what will be left out. In other words, name givers are actively involved in choosing names. It should be noted that, construal operations are actually mental processes. Language users use their minds to arrive at the names they arrive at. They basically reveal what appeared to matter most at the time the child was born. It is important to note that the relationship between the name and the event, place and time is coincidental. The following section talks about principles that are employed in choosing some names and leaving others among the Kuria and Iraqw.

### **Principles Employed in Metonymy**

Salience and construal operations are the basic principles employed in metonymic names. Salience is to do with a state of affairs where some things stand out from others. Lakoff (1987) talks about typicality of examples or salience as related to memorable or familiar things. He further says salience helps people to comprehend categories. On his part, Schmid (2007) says a cognitive unit is salient when it becomes part of the person's centre of attention. In Kuria and Iraqw, it is salient things/events and places that are chosen as names. For example, a path is something that stands out. In a bushy area, a path is something salient. It is big enough to be seen and noted. That is possibly why among the Kuria there is *Nyaghonchera* (path/way) and among the Iraqw, there is *Lohi* (path/way).

As part of metonymy, Lakoff (op cit) lists social stereotypes, paragons, ideals, salient examples and submodels as the principles guiding metonymy. According to him, these aspects are the ones that characterize metonymy.

It should also be noted that salience and other principles are a matter of construal. It is people themselves who decide to highlight some things and background others. That is why a child may be born beside the path and yet be named after rain or something else provided rain matters in the mind of the name giver at the moment of name choice. Similarly, a child born on the road side may be named after the road even when the birth took place when it was raining provided the name giver decides to highlight the road as a place of birth.

### **Reasons for Using Metonymy**

Although language users from Kuria and Iraqw communities may not be aware of what metonymy is, they use it quite considerably in their personal names. One may raise the question: Why do they use metonymy? Some reasons for using metonymy could include the following. First, they use metonymy for ease of memory. In the examples we have seen, most personal names come from prominent things that were associated with the birth of name bearers. Things such as rain, earthquake, famine, lakes and mountains are psychologically easy to remember because they stand out. This would very well be effective in communities which had no dating systems as the ones we have today. It would be easy to tell how old one is or where one was born just by asking their names. Second, metonymy is

used to show focus. It shows where the attention of the communicator is. For example, a name that talks about a river, a lake, a rock, a tree and a mount indicates that the focus of the name giver was to profile a place of birth and not something else. By contrast, a name that refers to morning, afternoon, evening, night and a season of the year shows that the focus of the name giver was on time. It is normally important to know what the focus of the communicator is in order to understand them. Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 36) also give focus as one reason for the use of metonymy. Third, metonymy is used in order to show the importance attached to what is mentioned. For example, the names *Wambura* and *Tluway* which mean rain are used to show how important rain is in the lives of the people in the two communities. So, apart from showing when the name bearers were born, the names also show that these people were associated with something important to the lives of the people. By extension, the names mean that these people came with blessing as rain is a blessing in these communities. In short, metonymy is motivated by the communicative force that name givers happen to have as they assign names to newborn babies.

### **Conclusion**

In this paper an attempt has been made to show the motivation for the use of metonymy in personal name choice and assignment among the Kuria and the Iraqw. It has been argued that the use of metonymy is part of cognition. So, it is cognitively driven. The language users need metonymy as one of its tools for categorization and hence communication. The paper has also observed that Kuria and Iraqw make use of metonymy a great deal. Both the two languages centre their names on birth. The latter is expressed in terms of place, time and circumstances that surrounded the birth of name bearers. Out of many options available, a limited set of them acts as the basis for name choice. Salience and other cognitive principles seem to govern the nature of metonymic relationship between the name bearer and circumstances of birth. However, in the overall, construal operations are the ones that come to dictate which metonym is the best option out of many in a given situation. Construal operations are an attribute of language users because it is language users who ultimately decide how to be understood and what to put their attention to. So, it is worth saying that metonymy has a cognitive basis driven by the need to remember, focus and significance of the entities involved in names.

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