Construction of a Collective Memory: Linguistic Strategies of the 'Bereaved' of Bweni in Pangani, Tanzania

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Abstract

This article examines the linguistic/discursive strategies used to construct a collective memory. The findings reported in this article are from a bigger research project that was partly conducted in Bweni, Pangani, Tanzania. The data were collected using interviews, focus group discussions, and video recording. The respondents were relatives of the dead whose remains have been interred at the Masterkim cemetery in the study area. The data were analysed qualitatively, and the analysis was guided by Critical Discourse Analysis as well as Systemic Functional Linguistics. The study found that the 'family' of Shariff[1] Abdallah and Sharifat Amina (his sister) deploy certain discursive and linguistic strategies to construct a collective memory of the origins of the family, the cemetery, and the celebrations related thereto. The article has also analysed the ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions deployed in constructing the same memory. The people choose and deploy lexical resources such as strategic adjectives to show that theirs is a family of noble people whose ancestors were 'complete' and highly educated Islamic scholars. The strategies are also used to urge the family members to lead a noble life and follow Islamic teachings by making sure that they are not distracted by secular things, which come and go.
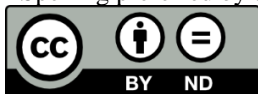
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[1] Spelling preferred by the relevant family

Introduction

Memory is a mental state constructed about something that happened or existed in the past or has some connection to the past. This mental state is constructed using certain linguistic or discursive strategies. The strategies are usually selected subjectively and deployed very strategically, in terms of which mores connected with a given memory one chooses to talk of and thus project. A particular memory may also be constructed using forms of semiotics other than language, for example, a painting. That is why some scholars maintain that discourse is multisemiotic, although, of course, language is the predominant form in most cases (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006; van Leeuwen 2008; van Leeuwen 2018). Maurice and Halbwachs (1985 cited in de Cillia et al. 1999) refer to the notion of memory as the selection of events [and realities] that occurred in the past and which some people consider important to them or even to others, or both. Here, we see memory as both personal and collective because, depending on the issue involved in the memory, it may relate to an individual or two or to a group of individuals.

In the collective memory of the dead, one finds echoes of the collectivisation of memory in that people talk of the dead as being ours or our people. The person buried at a cemetery may be one of them or someone's parent or relative, in which case the memory constructed around that person may be personal or private, but, of course, only to an extent, for someone who was great or famous and whose remains have been interred at a certain cemetery is usually collectively owned. The collective 'ownership' of the dead person or the dead leads to the construction of a collective memory of the person or persons concerned. In short, a given memory is considered to be collective if it refers to what a group of people, such as an organisation or family, remembers. This kind of memory is usually passed down from generation to generation, largely because of its importance to the relevant group. A particular collective memory may be about one thing or more. For instance, the collective memory of the family in Bweni, which is discussed in this article, embodies more than one thing, notably the origins of the family, the founding of the cemetery, and the dead. Members of the family hold this memory, not as individuals but as a group, hence the collectivisation of the relevant memory.

The construal of memory may take only a linguistic form or may involve using a combination of several semiotic resources since discourse is hardly only linguistically constructed. For temporal-spatial reasons, however, we

focus in this article on the use of linguistic strategies to construct a collective memory by the people of Pangani about those buried at the Masterkim graveyard, among others. It will be seen that belief plays a pivotal role in the construction of the memory under discussion. This is to be expected, for people have to believe that something happened or existed first and then talk of its memory using specific strategies. In addition, it has to have some importance to those remembering something. In a like fashion, a people's history will also come into the picture, for one cannot talk of a memory of something without telling the history around that thing. The rest of this article has the following divisions: Section 2 reviews the literature germane to the topic. Section 3 presents the methods adopted in the bigger study, of which the present article is a spin-off. Section 4 discusses the theoretical lenses whereby the data are analysed, and the findings discussed. Section 5 discusses the findings of the study, and section 6 provides a conclusion.

Literature Review

A collective memory is a mental representation of past events and realities related to a specific group of people (de Cellia et al. 1999). It may include positive or negative past events or realities that the group chooses to remember. The group sees something important to it as a whole in the event or reality that existed in the past (ibid). Taking Halbwachs' definition of collective memory as "the living memory of one's social group" (1994, as cited in De Saint-Laurent 2017, p. 2) a step further, de Saint-Laurent conceives the notion as "the past as it is remembered by those who lived it." De Saint-Laurent explains that collective memory is important for determining how a group sees itself as a particular kind of entity. And although the author has criticised Halbwachs, saying his conception of collective memory is erroneous because it is an individual that remembers, not a group, it might not be farfetched to borrow useful ideas from de Cellia et al. (1999) in their conception of the notion of nation. They note that people consider themselves a nation because they read the same newspapers, watch the same TV programmes, etc., which makes them see themselves as constituting one nation. This happens even though these people hardly meet. De Saint-Laurent herself has provided a remedy to what she sees as a defect of the notion, saying that if collective memory is studied as a social representation of the past, then there may be a collective memory. Indeed, one sees in her acceptance of the notion that her problem is not with the notion but rather with how it is studied. It may thus be correct to argue that

there is a collective memory when a group talks of a past event or reality they shared in a very similar manner and with very similar attitudes and identification with that past.

In the case of the dead, a group of people may construct a collective memory of what sort of people they were, what they represented, what they did, and what they stood for. As such, the construction of collective memory is bound to be both objective and subjective, a view slightly different from that taken by de Cellia et al. (1999). These scholars see collective memory as mainly subjective; this may not always be the case since what is represented is bound to be objective, even to an extent. In the case of the memory of the dead, it is obvious that some of the things said about them are real and, thus, objective. On the whole, nonetheless, the construction of collective memory to represent past events and realities is discursive in that those constructing it deploy linguistic means as well as other semiotic forms. Strategic expressions, constructions, and phonological devices such as intonation and stress may be deployed to construct a collective memory of a departed person or persons. We also see the taking on board of semiotic resources other than language in the form of, say, paintings and sculptures used to capture some memory of certain people (Tallents 2018). In the representation of the past, one may do it by "emphasising certain [things] and skewing their meanings and logic" to achieve some purpose (Martin 1995, p. 13). This becomes more pronounced when more than a single individual is involved in constructing a memory of the shared past. Language and other semiotic devices facilitate that.

For language, Halliday (1973, 2007) contends that language plays three metafunctions simultaneously. For instance, the ideational metafunction is used to represent past events and realities, and the textual metafunction provides linguistic devices such as cohesion and modality with which to do the representation in question. For instance, when talking of a dead relative, depending on how he was and how the relatives perceived him, people are likely to deploy condemning or praising devices in constructing the memory around the person. Some may say he was a kind person, that he was like no other, that he is irreplaceable, etc., and yet others may say that he was the cruellest person that ever lived. Language provides these means and others for constructing a (collective) memory. De Cellia et al. (1999, p. 160) call them "constructive strategies" and maintain that they are useful for constructing "identification and solidarity" with a given group.

Methods

The research findings reported in this article are from a bigger project undertaken in Tanga Region, Tanzania, on endangered African and German cemeteries of the 19th and 20th centuries. The overall objective of the project was to document the cemeteries and trace the genealogies of those buried in them. One of the specific objectives of the study was to analyse the linguistic or discursive devices the relatives of the dead of Bweni deploy to construct a collective memory. The bigger research project was partly carried out in Bweni, Pangani, and involved some of the relatives of the dead buried at the Masterkim cemetery, otherwise known as the shariffs' cemetery. The cemetery goes by that name primarily because the remains of several shariffs have been interred there. Both the cemetery and the respondents were purposively selected. The cemetery was selected that way because the project focused on endangered cemeteries of the period in focus, and so it qualified to be studied. The respondents were purposively selected because we focused on only the people who could talk of a collective memory around the dead and the graveyard at which they had been buried. As indicated above, our interest was in analysing the linguistic or discursive strategies the relatives used as they constructed the collective memory. We wanted to find out the motivations behind their selection of the strategies. Thus, snowball sampling was done with respondents referring to one another in a snowball fashion until the study reached a data saturation point.

The data were collected using two instruments: focus group discussion and interview. Regarding the relevance of the former to a study such as the present one, de Cillia et al. (1999, pp. 152–153) remark:

> The method of the 'focus-group discussion' [...] offers a very promising tool for ethnographic research in Critical Discourse Analysis. It enables one partially to study the recontextualization and transformation of specific […] concepts and identity narratives which are expressed by politicians, taught in educational systems (e.g., by teachers and in schoolbooks), promoted in the mass media, etc., and which are expressed in everyday situations and interactions. Specifically, it allows one to observe the local co-construction of the meaning of concepts (like 'nation' and 'identity') during an ongoing discussion by individuals but under the interactive influence of a group. In short, it provides one possible

methodological key to gaining access to the extraordinarily complex dialectics between the top-down procedures of hegemonic public opinion-making and the bottom-up processes of seismographic registering of moods, anxieties, and swings of specific groups of voters.

The interview method was adopted to afford the respondents room to talk freely about the issues the research focused on in the absence of other respondents. Indeed, the two instruments complemented each other in some way. Finally, the data were analysed qualitatively, with a specific focus on the linguistic or discursive strategies the respondents had used in the course of constructing collective memory.

Theoretical Framework
This article is grounded in Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA) in relation to data analysis and discussion of the findings. Through CDA, one can lay bare opaque social practices manifest in discourse. This is possible for CDA to enable one to transcend the surface, formalistic elements of a stretch of discourse and look at the institutional, cultural, and social phenomena surrounding or informing it, which are usually not straightforward. Their complexity makes it very difficult for the uninitiated to understand discourse and the purpose it serves in a particular context. Indeed, discourse is said to play a fundamental role in the areas of domination, unequal power relations, as well as memory and identity construction. Discourse production, distribution, and consumption are some of the discursive aspects examined by CDA scholars to determine, among others, what informs how discourse is produced, who controls the distribution of discourse in society, and why. It is also used to find out for whom a particular stretch of discourse is intended and why.

We have adopted the CDA version developed by Wodak and her colleagues (de Cellia et al. 1999; Wodak et al. 2001). Thus, we spell out its tenets and show its appropriacy to this article. Since the approach is a form of CDA, we provide further remarks on CDA. CDA examines discourse to establish how social practices, such as the construction of a given memory, are conducted. CDA scholars do this because they believe that such practices are "inscribed in and mediated through the linguistic system" as well as other semiotic systems such as images (Caldas-Coulthard & Coulthard 1996, p. xi). According to Wodak (2001, p. 2), "CDA aims to investigate

critically social inequality as it is expressed, signalled, constituted, legitimized and so on by language use (or in discourse)." The main goal is to "help create a world where people are not discriminated against because of sex, colour, creed, age or social class" (Caldas-Coulthard & Coulthard 1996, p. xi).

The Discourse-Historical Approach (henceforth the DHA) is an approach to CDA developed by Wodak and her colleagues, as mentioned above. The approach involves examining all the historical, social, political, and contextual aspects of a given piece of discourse to understand it well. It also looks at the diachronic change that certain kinds and genres of discourse have undergone for the same purpose. As a form of CDA and like CDA itself, the DHA also pays attention to the dialectical relationship between discursive events and the social structures, institutions, and contexts to which the events relate. The relationship between the two is said to be dialectical because discourse influences the events and is, in turn, influenced by them. Discourse plays a great role in the creation of roles, identities, and situations, but, of course, as we have already noted, the relationship is dialectical. In relation to the suitability of CDA in general and of the DHA in particular to this article, it should be noted that we examine the textual material as well as the socio-historical situation influencing its production by the relatives of the dead to construct a collective memory. We take the view that the dual context helps understand the motivations behind the respondents' choice of certain strategies as they attempt to construct their collective history. Some excerpts are extracted from the video documenting the 2020 commemorative celebrations obtained from the family in Tanga.

Nonetheless, since the respondents talk of their experiences of the world for the dead and since they do so using language, we found it is imperative to adopt metafunctions from Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Halliday 1973; Halliday & Matthiessen 2004). The ideational metafunction is concerned with the use of language to talk of phenomena in the real world. Speakers, as well as writers, have certain things they talk or write about. Such things or phenomena constitute the ideational metafunction. As for the interpersonal metafunction, it relates to the beliefs, evaluations, and attitudes one has about other people with whom one interacts. This meta-function is realised through mood and modality (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004; Halliday 2007). The final metafunction is the textual metafunction,

which is language itself. It is this metafunction that connects the ideational and interpersonal meta-functions. Cohesion and information structure play a critical role in the performance of the textual meta-function. Concerning an examination of how collective memory is constructed, the ideational metafunction is used to identify the mores and issues the respondents talk of as they construct the memory in question. The interpersonal metafunction is used to show how the construal of this memory depicts the respondents in relation to one another and their departed relatives. Finally, the textual metafunction is used to depict the way language is deployed to facilitate the performance of the other metafunctions.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Our focus in this article is on the relatives' linguistic or discursive strategies. Data were collected by interviewing and discussing with 50 respondents, and the analysis and discussion are both anchored on CDA and Systemic Functional Linguistics (henceforth SFL).

TOPOI/CONTENTS

We have identified some topoi/contents as the semantic macrostructures included in the construction of the collective memory. The semantic macrostructures identified relate to various things. For instance, the respondents discursively construct the origins of the family, tracing their background to as far as the founding family members who arrived in Pangani from Yemen through Kilwa, where they had lived for some time. In this regard, a respondent explains:

(1)

Lazima tujue kwamba kuna kuondoka. Usije ukakaa tu aa utakuwepo utakuwepo? Hapana walikuwepo hivyo na leo hawapo. […] Wazee wetu hawa asili yao ni Shariff Abdallah bin Shariff Hassan bin Shariff Swabie. Shariff Abdallah kaburi lake ni hili hapa kushotoni kwangu, hili kubwa. Huyu ndo alikuja na ndugu zake, ndo alikuja na baadhi ya watoto wake akiishilia nao Kilwa. Huyu Shariff Abdallah ni katika group la akina Abdul Swabir (inaudible). [….] Wazee hawa walikuja kwa hali nzuri na walikuja haliyakuwa ni wakamilifu, ni wanachuoni. Asili yao walikuwa wanachuoni kamili. Na walikuja na watoto wao wakiwa nao ni wanachuoni kamili wakaishilia Kilwa. Na asili yao kila wafikapo huanzisha mji [….] Baadaye walihama kuja katika mji wa Pangani. Pangani walipokewa lakini hata hivyo hawakukaa sana, waliamua kuja Bweni.

We have got to understand that we will die. Don't think that you will live forever. No, others were here, but they are gone. Our

forefather is Shariff Abdallah bin Shariff Hassan bin Shariff Swabir. Shariff Abdallah was buried in the big grave to my left. He came here with his relatives as well as some of his children; they first settled in Kilwa. Shariff Abdallah was part of the group of Abdul Swabir (inaudible). [….] These elders came in good condition and came as complete people, as scholars. They were real scholars, and their children were scholars, too. [….] Later, they migrated to Pangani, where they were warmly welcomed. However, they stayed there briefly and came to Bweni.

In this excerpt, the respondent lets others know where they came from and who founded the family. He also tells them they mustn't think that they will live forever, saying that they will also go someday. The objective in telling them this is perhaps to encourage them to live a better life by doing good deeds so that, like the dead relatives represented by Shariff Abdallah, they may be remembered fondly. We see that he depicts such family members as having been very successful people, saying, *Wazee hawa walikuja kwa hali nzuri na walikuja haliyakuwa ni wakamilifu, ni wanachuoni* "These elders came in good condition and came as complete people, as scholars." It will be seen that the person wants to show that there is a family of successful people whose forefathers had reached the pinnacle of Islamic learning. To show the extent to which they were highly learned people, he uses the word *wanachuoni* "scholars" twice and says the elders and their children were all scholars. That is why he gives this history.

History of the collective remembrance of the dead is also discursively constructed using specific expressions. In the excerpt below, a respondent says:

(2)

Watukufu nyote mlio hapa waislamu hadhara hii imeasisiwa kwa muda mrefu. Si mpya. Sasa hivi ina zama nyingi zilizokwishapita. Toka kukabidhiwa sisi mikononi tukawa ndo wasimamizi na kaka zetu ambao wametangulia mbele ya haki waliokuwa na wazee na wazee kuondoka sasa wakatuacha na kaka zetu na kaka zetu wakaondoka hadi wakatuacha sisi huu leo tunautimiza mwaka wa arubaini. Sio mwanzo wa haul.

All of you holy Muslims present here today need to know that this 'gathering' has gone on for many years. It is not new. Many years have passed. Since the 'gathering' was handed down to us by our brothers who were with our departed elders, and we became the

> supervisors of the celebrations, forty years have passed. This is not the beginning of the commemorative celebrations.

This excerpt shows that members of the audience are reminded that the celebrations began many years ago, that is, they are not a new phenomenon. They have been passed down to succeeding generations, including the present one. It appears as if some people thought that the celebrations were forty years old or younger; it is shown, nonetheless, that they are older than that, and the family needs to perpetuate them. Why should they perpetuate them? We are not given the reason in the excerpt. It is highly likely, however, that the people are encouraged to continue with *hawli* (commemorative celebrations) to remember their departed relatives. We learned during the discussions in Bweni that sometimes family members from Kenya, Uganda, and the UK participate in the celebrations. That is highly likely the reason the celebrations need to be sustained. In addition, they are an important unifying factor and a source of fame for the family, just as the Masterkim cemetery itself is. The remembrance of the dead also takes place on social media nowadays. Kohn et al. (2018) note that there are sites on Facebook used for that purpose. The aim is similar to that reported by the respondents in Bweni, to maintain the bond between the dead and the living. Whereas those posting commemorative messages and images online have taken remembrance several steps further, the people of Bweni have remained traditional by maintaining their connection largely through commemorative celebrations. Nevertheless, the aim is the same as the one mentioned above. It is worth pointing out that it is not easy at present to predict if the relatives of the people buried at Masterkim will also go digital, partially or fully. If someday they choose to organise virtual commemorative celebrations, they will also have taken the celebrations a step further. The question is, however, whether *hawli* will have the same importance as it has had for years when the family makes it virtual. For example, will most of its members partake in it? Will they take it seriously as they have done for many years? Will they attach any importance to it? This article does not have answers to any one of these questions; research could be conducted to answer the questions when the family has turned the celebrations virtual.

Another semantic macrostructure identified is the discursive construction of a martyr. During the discussions/interviews, it was established that the family was generally dedicated to spreading Islam. They founded mosques and towns in the places they visited to spread the religion. A respondent remarks in this connection:

(3)

> *Walikuwa watu watatu. Walipofika Kericho, katika namna ya kutangaza dini katika dhama zile ilikuwa dini hii haitakiwi wala haitumiliki kwa upande ule. Kwa hiyo wao wakawa wanatangaza dini hali ya kuwa wanajificha. Bahati mbaya au nzuri wakatambulika. Katika kutambulika kukaundwa utaratibu wa kuwaua. Mmoja wapo walifanikiwa kumuua ambaye ni Shariff Ahmad bin Shariff Abdallah. Alifariki Kericho. Aliuliwa kule na kabila moja linaitwa Wanandi […] Alhamdullilah ndani ya mwenendo huo wale wazee walimzika ndugu yao na kwa sasa sehemu ile aliyozikwa yule bwana mkubwa pana msikiti ulijengwa. Ndani ya msikiti ule ndo kwenye kaburi lake.*
>
> There were three people. When they arrived in Kericho, where they had gone to spread the religion, the religion was not liked and needed there. Therefore, they spread it secretly. Unfortunately, they were discovered, and plans to kill them were hatched. The Nandi killed one of them, Shariff Ahmad bin Shariff Abdallah, in Kericho [….] Alhamdullilah, the other elders buried their brother. The place where the great man was buried was built a mosque. The grave is in the mosque.

Shariff Ahmad is portrayed as a martyr who lost his life spreading Islam. His death is a blessing in that a mosque has been erected where his grave is. The shariff's death also suggests that the religion was later accepted among the local community, namely the Nandi, who killed him. This reading of the portrayal of religion seems plausible for at least one thing. If Islam was not accepted by the people, the mosque would most likely not have been constructed. Therefore, the memory of the dead shariff shows that his death resulted in the expansion of Islam in Kericho and in other parts of Kenya, too. During the fieldwork, it was learned that some of those who were with Shariff Ahmad moved to Kisumu and Lamu, where they went to do the same job as the dead shariff had been doing in Kericho.

Moreover, during the commemorative event, which took place in 2020 (or 1442 in the Islamic calendar) to remember those who have gone home, a sheikh talked about the importance of knowing the background or origins of Muslims. Thus, he chose certain words to underscore that importance and others to castigate the distractions facing Muslims. He says:

(4)

Waislamu watakiwa wawe na usuli. Wasitazame hivi vitu vya kuzuka. Yanayozuka ni mengi na yaliyopita katika mazuko ni mengi lakini chukua asili,

> *angalia asili yako. Rudi kwenye asili yako; usuli ndio itakayotuweka. Na ndio msingi; tukishashika msingi basi hatutetereki.*
>
> Muslims are supposed to have a background/origins. They shouldn't look at things that emerge. Many things emerge, and many others have emerged and passed. Take the origins, and look at your origins/background. Return to your roots. It is our roots that will sustain us. If we hold on to our roots, we will not be weak.

Looking back, the speaker sees that Muslims have veered off the original path, making it difficult for them to be swayed by what happened around them. Today, however, the situation has changed, as Muslims get swayed by things that come and go, most likely, such things include those brought about by the forces of globalisation, for example, social media, which seem to have taken many people captive. The speaker underscores the necessity for Muslims to return to their roots to embrace their origins. He believes that it is the embracing of their origins that will sustain them. If they embrace it, they will not be weak, meaning that the things that emerge and die will not mislead them. Our reading of what the respondent says shows that the things that emerge are not as important as what Muslims are exhorted to follow. Specifically, he remarks: *Rudi kwenye asili yako; usuli ndio itakayotuweka:* "Return to your roots. It is the background that will sustain us." What the speaker says also suggests that Muslims and, by extension, Islam are in danger of being destroyed because they have forgotten their origins/roots. Thus, if they want to exist as Muslims, they must return to their roots. Another respondent talks of remembrance of the dead in the following way:

(5)

> *Sisi tumerithishwa. Wazee walikuwa wanafanya nawanatuchukua tunakwenda tunaona. Na kadri tunavyokwenda kila mzee atashika nafasi. Akiondoka ataingia mwingine   mwingine. Kwa hiyo, urithi ule unaendelea. Sisi tulikuwa tunashikwa mikono na wazee wetu na sisi bado leo tunakwenda na akili zetu na tunajua faida yake ni nini.*
>
> We inherited it. Our fathers used to do it. They used to take us there, and we saw it. And as time passes, each elder will hold the position. Then another elder and yet another elder. Therefore, the heritage continues to exist. Our forefathers used to lead us there by the hand. We continue going there as grown-up people, and we know its benefits.

This contributor's point is echoed in the following contribution by another contributor, who says that celebrations and visitations to the graveyard are

open to everyone, including children. Indeed, the respondent had this to say, as far as the involvement of children in the activity is concerned:

(6)

> *Hatukatazi mtoto kama huyu kwenda kwenye maziara. Unajua mtu anapoona kitu kadri siku anakua na yeye anajua kwamba hiki kitu kipo nimekikuta na mimi natakiwa nikiendeleze hivi. Kama sisi tuliyakuta tunajua itikadi ni hivi basi tunavyoenda nao wanaona ileile itikadi. Hapa kunafanyika hivi kunafanyika hivi.*
>
> We don't forbid a child like this from going to the cemetery. You see, if a person sees something, as s/he grows up, s/he knows that there is something. I found it being done, and I am supposed to sustain it in this way. If we find it being practised, we know the ideology, and as we involve them in the activity, they see the same ideology. This is how something is done.

METAFUNCTIONS
Ideational metafunction

Some of the respondents use the ideational metafunction in their contributions. For instance, this metafunction is deployed to talk about the background of the family so that those who do not know it can do so. As well as being used to talk of the origins of the family, the metafunction is deployed to link the origins to the founders and to show what kind of people they were. They are said to have been complete and successful people as far as Islamic learning is concerned. The background of the family delineated through this metafunction mirrors what Coffin (2006, p. 51) says, that is, the remembrance is constructed using "the functional elements of the Participants, Process, and the Circumstances" surrounding it. Together, these elements constitute what is generally called context by the scholars using SFL in their work (see, for example, Halliday and Matthiessen 2004; and Jerome & Ting 2021). It is noted that SFL "aims to understand the functions that language serves in a context of use and the functional organization of meaning in language" (Jerome & Ting 2021, p. 59).

The same metafunction is used in talking of the celebrations organised to remember the dead. More specifically, the ideational metafunction serves to show that the commemorative celebrations have continued for many years and that they are very important to maintain. The emphasis placed on the celebrations is geared towards making those present, in particular the

younger generation, know that it is important to sustain the celebrations, which they will inherit from the elders when they are old or dead.

We also see the same metafunction being used to underscore the place of a background to Muslims. It is indicated that the background or roots if firmly held on to, can protect Muslims from forces or things that come and go. It is crystal clear that certain people have noticed that Muslims and, by extension, Islam are in danger of being destroyed by such things, which is why it is important or necessary to underscore the role of background or roots in Muslims' lives.

Interpersonal metafunction
Another metafunction illustrated in this article is the interpersonal metafunction, which has to do with the evaluations, assessments, and attitudes (Alaei & Ahangari 2016) language users have towards someone. In this article, which is about the construction of a collective memory, we see how the relatives construct this memory by mostly speaking favourably of their dead relatives and of themselves, too. To illustrate, the metafunction is realised through mood and modality. The most pervasive modality type deployed in the data is the declarative. Declarative sentences are used in very many instances. For example, a respondent uses declaratives in talking about the inheritance of the commemorative practices as follows: *Sisi tumerithishwa. Wazee walikuwa wanafanya na wanatuchukua tunakwenda tunaona* "We inherited it. Our fathers used to do it. They used to take us there, and we saw it." These two declarative sentences are deployed to underscore the necessity of continuing with the tradition that the elders started and that the others have inherited from them. Another speaker elaborates more on this using the same modality type, saying, *Wazee kuondoka sasa wakatuacha na kaka zetu na kaka zetu wakaondoka hadi wakatuacha sisi huu leo tunatimiza mwaka wa arubaini* "Since the 'gathering' was handed down to us by our brothers who were with our departed elders and we became the supervisors of the celebrations, forty years have passed."

Another modality type is the interrogative. It is used thus: *Usijee ukakaa aa utakuwepo* […] *utakuwepo?* "Don't think that you will live forever […] You will be present?" In this case, the interrogative sentence is used to emphasise the importance of doing that which is good and right. The family members are reminded or advised to do good while they are still alive so that when they die, they may be remembered fondly as the dead relatives (especially those who founded the family, the cemetery, and the

commemorative practices). The 'holiness' of the departed is shown using carefully selected adjectives, including the adjective *wakamilifu*, "complete." Another adjective used to describe the supposed holiness of the people gathered is *watukufu*, "holy people," which is placed in juxtaposition to the word *Waislam*, "Muslims." The Muslims are presented as holy people, meaning they are blemish-less. Perhaps they are described that way because they live by the prescriptions and teachings of Islam, as evidenced by their actions and individual character, a point contradicting what the other person said.

An imperative sentence is also used to urge the Muslims present to return to their background. Jerome and Ting (2021) note that the imperative is used to tell addressees to do what speakers ask them to. In the text presented earlier, this modality type is used thus: *Rudi kwenye asili yako* "Return to your roots." As well as urging them to return to their roots, the sentence also shows that the people do or follow things that are not naturally theirs. The things are highly likely to be secular and Western-originated, such as social media and modernity in general. In other words, they are un-Islamic, and therefore, the Muslims who follow such things have abandoned their roots and are, thus, in danger and put Islam in danger, too. The speaker believes that if they return to their roots, they will not be weak. This belief is expressed using another modality type, that is, the conditional sentence: *Tukishashika msingi, basi hatutetereki:* "If we hold on to our roots, we will not be weak." This conditional sentence is characterised by epistemic modality, which shows the degree of certainty the speaker has about what he says (Brogaard & Gatzia 2017).

The present speaker seems to be a hundred percent sure that what he says will be the case if Muslims return to their roots. What gives him this confidence cannot be deciphered from his contribution, but perhaps it is from his training in the Islamic religion. The speaker is a highly experienced Muslim cleric. What the participant says makes much sense from a religious perspective. For instance, religion is said to be important in moulding people's character so that they behave well and live peacefully with one another. This is a noble function of religion. Nonetheless, can what the speaker advocates be realised in this day and age, given the multiplicity of (negative) modern influences on human life? If it can't, what needs to be done to reduce the impact of such influences on human life to a significant

extent? Or should things be left as they are, contrary to what the speaker is advocating?

A conditional sentence is also used by another respondent as she talks of the commemorative practices. This respondent remarks: *Unajua mtu anapoona kitu kadri siku anakua na yeye anajua kwamba hiki kitu kipo* "You see, if a person sees something, as s/he grows up, s/he knows that there is something." Although talking of a different thing, this respondent also deploys epistemic modality since she seems certain that seeing something enables someone to know the thing or to know how it is done. She seems to reason from the observation: catch something or someone young. Therefore, if the children are involved in commemorative celebrations from a young age, they will manage and organise them when they grow up. She believes that without taking any contending forces into account, forces such as those the cleric decries because they have led Muslims to veer off the original path.

Textual metafunction

This metafunction relates to the organisation and flow of information in the "oral, written, and computer-mediated communication" in which participants engage (Gebhard & Accurso 2020: 1030). As they interact or communicate with others, people shift from one 'style' to another in terms of, for example, the words they choose or the cohesive devices they deploy in the communicative event, in short, how the message or information is organised. Gebhard and Accurso (2020) give an example of a student who shifts from one style to another: from multilingual language use to scientific language. The clause in a language is organised as a message, whose organisation may be Theme + Rheme or Given + New. Let us illustrate this message organisation with excerpts from the data produced by the people of Bweni. One respondent says, *Waislamu watakiwa wawe na usuli. Wasitazame hivi vitu vya kuzuka* "Muslims are supposed to have a background/origins. They shouldn't look at things that emerge." In the first sentence, the speaker organises the message in such a way that *Waislamu* is the Theme and the rest of the sentence the Rheme. When he says something additional but related to what he is talking about, the speaker begins with given information and then provides new information: *Wasitazame* (in which Muslims are embedded) is given information, but *hivi vitu vya kuzuka* is new. This way of organising the message makes it easy for the listener to know the people who are being told not to follow things that emerge. If the

speaker had begun with the Rheme and if the context were not very clear, perhaps it would have been difficult for the listener to identify the addressees. Another speaker also organises what he says in the same way. He says, *Wazee hawa walikuja kwa hali nzuri na walikuja haliyakuwa ni wakamilifu, ni wanachuoni*. This speaker begins with the Theme and then gives the Rheme. The purpose is more or less the same as the one already discussed. The present speaker first mentions the people he is talking about and then says what kind of people they were: they were good, complete, and learned people. As such, the listener can identify the subject of the discussion.

Conclusion

This article has examined the discursive construction of a collective memory by relatives of the dead of Bweni in Pangani, Tanzania. The decision to do this was largely based on two things. One is that the family has a famous cemetery at Masterkim, where the remains of arguably great shariffs and other people have been interred. The other is that the family to which the cemetery belongs organises annual commemorative celebrations to remember their dead relatives. The celebrations have gone on for years and enjoy a somewhat huge participation of people from inside and outside Tanzania. For these two reasons, it was thought important to look at how the family constructs a collective memory of the origins of the family and its dead members, of the graveyard, and of the celebrations. It has been found that strategic discourse or language is deployed to construct the memory in question. Specifically, collective memory is constructed of such semantic macrostructures as the origins of the family, the cemetery, and the dead. Through strategically selected linguistic devices, the respondents speak fondly of these issues. And they do so using ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions. In the final analysis, it is established that collective memory is not something that exists out there, but rather, it is something that is constructed using carefully selected linguistic or discursive devices.

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