Studies in Linguistics and Language Education
e-ISSN: 3088-8115 | p-ISSN: 3088-8069
Volume 1 Issue 2 / December 2025 pp. 98-113

From Consumption to Internalization: The Polysemy of "di" in Baule[1]

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Published: 31/12/2025

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Citation:
Kone, K. A., & Kouadio, K. W. (2025). From Consumption to Internalization: The Polysemy of "di" in Baule. *Studies in Linguistics and Language Education, 1*(2), 98–113.

ABSTRACT: *Linguistic data suggest that many contextual senses of "di" extend beyond consumption. This study investigates the general schematic meaning of "di" within the framework of cognitive linguistics, drawing on a corpus of over 123 expressions. The findings reveal that "di" is organized around the notion of internalization or inclusion, which underlies its prototypical sense of food consumption and motivates its extensions across diverse domains. These extensions rely on metaphorical mappings and the CONTAINER schema. The study contributes to cross-linguistic research by documenting culture-specific metaphors in Baule structured around food, highlighting its role as a conceptual anchor that shapes cultural reasoning and practices.*

KEYWORDS: Cognitive Linguistics, Di, Metaphor, Polysemy, Container Schema

Studies in Linguistics and Language Education (SLLE)
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[1] The Baule language is spoken in Côte d'Ivoire. It belongs to the Kwa language family, which is part of the Niger–Congo family. The people who speak this language are known as the Baule. They mostly live in the central part of Côte d'Ivoire (Timyan, Kouadio & Loucou, 2003).

Introduction

At first glance, it may seem trivial for a Baule speaker to investigate the verb "di", usually glossed as "to eat" (Beuseize, 2022). Yet, closer examination reveals that its meaning extends well beyond consumption. Consider the following examples[2]:

(1) (a) Di yalɛ ⟶ *live in poverty*
/di/poverty/
(b) Di aklunjuɛ ⟶ *be happy, joyful*
/di/happiness/
(c) Di tutre ⟶ *to boast*
/di/orgueil/
(d) Di amganblalɛ ⟶ *to rust*
/di/rust/
(e) Di jeliwa ⟶ *predict the future, prophesy*
/di/soothsayer/

Examples in (1) show that the meaning of "di" encompasses emotional states (*di aklunjuɛ*), physical alteration (*di amganblalɛ*), economic state (di yalɛ), social behaviour (*di tutre*), and spirituality (*di jeliwa*). Thus, consumption is only one contextual meaning among many, and cannot define the general meaning of "*di"*. Consequently, it is necessary for linguists to identify the general or schematic meaning of "di" and explain how its contextual uses derive from that meaning.
Accordingly, this study seeks to address the following research questions:

- What is the schematic meaning of "di"?
- Which cognitive mechanisms connect the schematic meaning to the contextual senses of "di"?
- To what extent are these mechanisms grounded in Baule speakers' cultural and experiential worldview?

To answer these questions, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- The verb "di' has a schematic meaning that motivates its various contextual uses;
- The schematic meaning of "di" is related to its contextual senses through specific cognitive mechanisms
- The cognitive mechanisms that connect the schematic meaning and the other meanings are grounded in the cultural and experiential worldview of Baule speakers.

Given the research questions and hypotheses, the study pursues the following objectives:

- Identify the schematic meaning of "di" in Baule language,
- Describe and analyze the cognitive mechanisms that connect the schematic meaning to the contextual senses of "di"
- Explain the conceptual basis of "di" in relation to Baule cultural experience;

[2] All the examples provided in this paper are cited from Dictionnaire Baoulé-Français by Timyan, Kouadio & Loucou (2003)

This study is based on a corpus of one hundred and twenty-five (125) Baule expressions from *Dictionnaire Baoulé-Français* (Timyan, Kouadio & Loucou, 2003). These expressions were checked with Baule speakers to ensure they reflect linguistic habits. To analyse the data, we performed both a metaphor-based analysis and a schema-based analysis.
The paper is organized in four parts. First, we introduce the key concepts from cognitive linguistics that underpin the analysis. Second, we make some preliminary remarks about the functioning of "di". Third, we make a description of polysemy in the use of "di". Finally, we examine the experiential grounding of the cognitive mechanisms involved in the use of "di" in Baule.

1. Theoretical Framework

Since this study falls within Cognitive Linguistics, it is necessary to define some key concepts that underpin the study. We will define the notions of *family resemblance*, *prototype*, *embodied meaning, polysemy, image schema* and *metaphor*.

1.1. Prototype

The concept of prototype was introduced in Cognitive Psychology by Eleanor Rosch (1973 a and b). She showed that categories are not homogeneous sets of equally representative members; rather some members are more central than others. The most representative member of a category is what Rosch called the "prototype". In semantics, the prototypical meaning is the central meaning from which semantic extensions are made. In the specific case of "di," the data suggest the existence of a more central and basic meaning, which functions as the prototypical meaning from which semantic extensions are derived.

1.2. Embodied Meaning

The notion of embodied meaning holds that the meaning of linguistic items is grounded in human biology and socio-physical experience (Lakoff, 1987). In other words, conceptual structure and linguistic expression are shaped by human bodily capacities as well as interactions with the physical and social world. From this perspective, the meaning of the verb "di" can be understood as arising from the particular social and physical experience of the Baule people.

1.3. Polysemy

Polysemy is a language phenomenon where a single linguistic unit has more than one distinct but related meanings. It constitutes a major area of research in cognitive linguistics, which is studied not just in lexical semantics but also in morphology and syntax. For cognitive linguists, a polysemous word encodes a network of senses organized around a central meaning. Polysemy thus reflects conceptual organization and mental representation rather than being a mere surface-level phenomenon (Evans, 2006; Tyler and Evans, 2003). This study embraces the cognitive linguistics view in positing that the verb "di" constitutes a conceptual category of distinct but related senses organized around a central meaning. Thus, its functioning is a case of polysemy.

1.4. Image Schema

An important issue that has intrigued cognitive linguists is the question of what gives rise to polysemy in language. Linguistic categories, like non-linguistic conceptual categories, are organized so that less prototypical senses derive from more prototypical ones. This process is made possible through cognitive mechanisms, such as image schemas, which allow for meaning extension (Evans, 2006).

An image schema is a recurring and dynamic pattern that emerges from our bodily and perceptual interaction with the physical world, which structures our understanding of experience and guides our reasoning (Johnson, 1987). In this study, we will argue that image schema is one cognitive mechanism that structure the various senses of "di".

1.5. Metaphor

Metaphor constitutes a major cognitive mechanism of meaning extension, alongside image schema and metonymy. In cognitive linguistics, metaphor is defined as the understanding of one conceptual domain (*the target domain*) in terms of another (*the source domain*) (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Metaphor enables the projection of experiential knowledge gained from direct interaction with the physical world onto more abstract domains, thereby facilitating understanding and reasoning. This projection extends meaning from concrete domains to abstract ones. For instance, our bodily experience of containment underlies the metaphor STATES ARE CONTAINERS, which allows us to conceptualize abstract states in terms of physical boundaries and interiors (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Kövecses, 2010). In the analysis that follows, we argue that certain senses of "*di*" can be accounted for as metaphorical extensions of its prototypical meaning.

2. Preliminary Demonstration of Polysemy

Before delving into description, is essential to situate whether "di" represents a case of polysemy – a single word with distinct but related meanings - or homonymy – separate words with unrelated meanings.

One might reasonably hypothesize that historically distinct words converged into the single form "di". However, as Kouadio (1998) notes, our current knowledge of Baule does not allow us to confirm this, due to the lack of historical data. Available evidence is limited to informant reports or the intuitions of native-speaker researchers.

Another possible approach would be to identify different pronunciations of "di" and treat any phonetic distinction accompanied by semantic differences as evidence for homonymy. This, however, is not viable because in Baule, monosyllabic verb roots do not carry inherent tone; the tone of the verb varies according to aspect and modality (Kouadio, 1998). Consequently, it is currently impossible to distinguish different types of "di" based on pronunciation.

In the absence of diachronic or phonetic evidence supporting homonymy, and given that tonal variation does not affect meaning, we conclude that "di" exhibits characteristics of a polysemous word (Beuseize, 2022).

3. Description of Polysemy in the Use of "di"

To describe the functioning of polysemy through the use of "di", we make the analysis at two levels: a metaphor-based analysis and a schema-based analysis.

3.1. Metaphor-based Analysis

In the metaphor-based analysis, we focus on the senses of "di" that are related through metaphor.

3.1.1. Consumption Senses of "di"

The Literal Consumption Sense

The literal and prototypical meaning of "di" is biological consumption. It is the first meaning that comes to one's mind and it is so central that native speakers often treat 'to eat' as the core

or even exclusive meaning of "*di"* (Beuseize, 2022). This prototypical meaning of "di" is illustrated in the following example:

(2) Kuain su di aliɛ ⟶ *Kuain is eating food*
/Kuain/PROG/di/food/

It is essential to stress here that the biological consumption sense of "**di"** is not inherent to the verb itself but arises compositionally from its collocation with food-related nouns. This compositional nature helps explain how the meaning extends metaphorically to non-food contexts. The biological consumption sense is perceived in the following illustrations:

(3) (a) Kuain su di kpaun ⟶ *Kuain is eating bread*
/Kuain/PROG/di/bread/

(b) Kuain su di awie ⟶ *Kuain is eating rice*
/Kuain/PROG/di/rice/

As can be seen from (7a) and (7b), despite the replacement of "food" by "bread" and "rice", the meaning of "di" still relates to biological consumption because these nouns evokes the concept of "eating".
Two fundamental aspects underlie this concept of eating: a **physical dimension** (the physical act of ingesting food) and a **social dimension** (the communal practice of sharing meals). These two dimensions not only structure the prototypical sense of "*di"* but also motivate its extensions through metaphors and image schemas, creating bridges to its other senses.

Metaphorical Consumption Senses

One way the biological consumption sense extends to other areas is the metaphorical mapping of economic consumption to biological one. This extension is the basis of the following expression:

(4) ɔ di li sika-'n ⟶ *He spent the money*
/He/di/RESULT/money/DEF/

In (8), the economic act of spending money is construed as a physical act of ingesting food. This is possible through the metaphors MONEY IS FOOD and SPENDING MONEY IS EATING FOOD.
The biological sense of consumption also extends to the temporal domain through the projection of food onto time. Consider the following examples:

(5) (a) Waka-'n ɔ'a di afuɛ kun ⟶ *The tree is one year old*
/Tree/DEF/it/RESULT/di/year/one/

(b) be wan be su di man anglo ⟶ *They say they will not spend a month*
/They/say/they/PROG/di/not/month/

(c) ɔ di li blɛ kan ⟶ *He spent some time*
/It/di/RESULT/time/a bit/

In (9), nouns such as *afuɛ* ("year"), *anglo* ("month"), and *blɛ* ("time, moment") are symptomatic of the temporal concept, which functions as a target domain structured by the source domain of food/eating. Comparable expressions include: *di le* ("to last one or more days") and *di dɔ* (to last an hour).

These forms reveal a conventional metaphorical mapping: TIME IS FOOD and, more specifically, SPENDING TIME IS EATING FOOD. In this mapping, the physical act of eating is projected onto the abstract notion of temporal duration and expenditure. This projection explains the polysemous extension of the verb "di" from literal consumption to temporal usage.

Another area where the literal consumption sense of "di" is extended metaphorically is the domain of life. This is an example:

(6) Be di li mɛn ⟶ *They have enjoyed life*
/They/di/RESULT/world/

Literally, the noun *mɛn* means "the world", but when combined with "di", the overall meaning becomes the enjoyment of life. Therefore, the expression *di mɛn* has more to do with life than the world itself. It projects the pleasurable experience of eating food onto the pleasurable experience of enjoying life. The cognitive tool that facilitates this projection is the metaphor ENJOYING LIFE IS ENJOYING FOOD, which derives from the metaphor LIFE IS FOOD.

In short, the literal consumption sense of "di" extends to three other metaphorical consumption senses where abstract entities – money, time, and life – are construed as things that can be consumed. The following diagram is a schematic representation of these extensions:

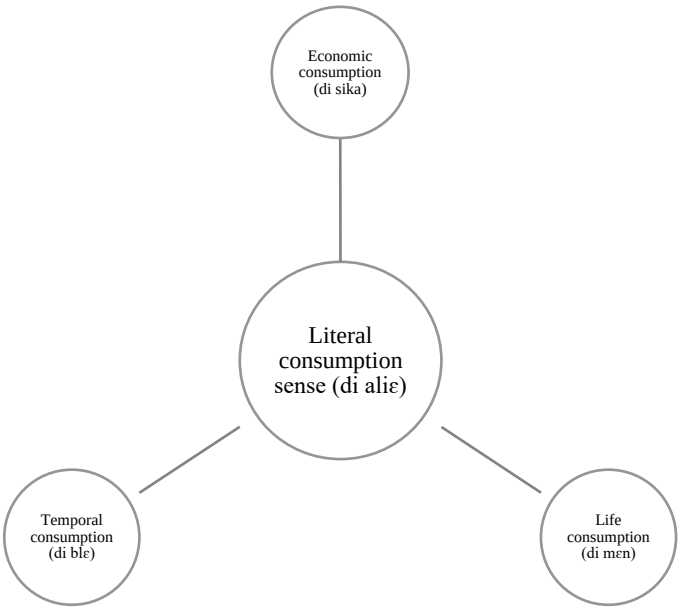

Figure 1: Literal and Metaphorical Consumption Senses of "di"

It is noteworthy that the metaphors MONEY IS FOOD, TIME IS FOOD and LIFE IS FOOD are not commonly attested in English. Classical metaphor studies have not clearly identified them, despite their conventionalization in Baule. These findings highlight the contribution of

Baule to metaphor research, revealing culturally specific mappings that expand our understanding of human conceptualization of abstract domains.

3.1.2. Relationship Sense of "di"

The relationship sense of "di" is noticeable in instances where it conveys the idea of *being in* a kind of relationship. This sense is corroborated by the following examples:

(7) (a) Ajua ni Amlan be di ⟶ *Ajua and Amlan are on good terms*
/Ajua/and/Amlan/they/di/

(b) Be di annuanzɛ ⟶ *They are on good terms*
/They/di/harmony/

Except these examples, the relationship sense of "di" occurs in expressions such as

(8) (a) di je su / di nuan bui su ⟶ *pretend to have good relationships with someone*
/di/teeth/on surface/

(b) di anyinsa ⟶ *to disrespect someone / to have no regard for someone*
/di/disrespect/

(c) di janvuɛ ⟶ *to be close friends and constantly do each other favors*
/di/friend/

Examples (8) and (9) express some kind of relationship that is either good or bad. Each expression has a distinct meaning and all are distinct from the prototypical consumption meaning. Despite these differences, the relationship meanings of "di" are related to one another and they are related to the consumption meaning through its biological and social dimensions. From a biological perspective, eating entails bringing something inside the body, which aligns with the containment schema. This basic experience provides a metaphorical bridge to relationships, which are often conceptualized as containers that one can enter, remain in, or exit. The metaphor RELATIONSHIPS ARE CONTAINERS, although not explicitly mentioned by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), is coherent with their container metaphor idea. It is evidenced by expressions such as: be *in* a relationship, *enter* a relationship, step *out of* a relationship, *break* up a relationship, etc. Thus, the consumption meaning evokes physical containment while the relationship meaning evokes metaphorical containment.

The social dimension is another point of convergence of these contextual meanings. Food consumption is a social activity as it gathers individual around a meal. Thus, food consumption is a way people socialize and demonstrate how they are connected to one another. One thing to observe here is that it is generally easier for people to eat together with people they are familiar with than to eat with people who are totally unknown to them. It means that food consumption is a barometer of social bond. This gives rise to the metaphor BEING IN A RELATIONSHIP IS EATING FOOD TOGETHER. Literally, the expression *"be di" (they are on good terms)* gives the message that some people have good relationships which makes it possible for them to eat together. This metaphor bridges the consumption meaning and the relational meaning of "di" as it structures the abstract notion of being in a relationship in terms of the concrete act of eating food together.

In this section, we have demonstrated that the relational meaning, though distinct, is connected to the consumption meaning of "di" through the metaphors RELATIONSHIPS ARE

CONTAINERS and BEING IN A RELATIONSHIP IS EATING FOOD TOGETHER. In the next section, we will introduce the other senses of "di" and show that they are related to the consumption schema through image-schema.

3.2. Schema-based Analysis

The schema-based analysis applies to cases where the senses are grounded in an image schema. In this approach, the image schema serves as the underlying structure—or cognitive bond—that connects the various senses. The schema-based senses account for many senses identified in the corpus, as demonstrated in the analysis below.

3.2.1. Activity and Function Sense of "di"

There are instances from the corpus where the meaning of "di" relates to the performance of some activity or some function. This activity and function sense of "di" is evidenced by the following examples[3]:

(9) (a) Kofi di junman ⟶ *Kofi works*
/Kofi/di/work/

(b) ɔ di sonja ⟶ *He is in the army*
/He/di/army/

(c) ɔ di kpɛn ⟶ *He holds the position of chief*
/He/di/Chief/

(d) Kuajo di i si aja ⟶ *Kuajo is his father's heir*
/Kuajo/di/POSS/father/inheritance/

Activity sense of "di"

In (10a), "di" combines with *junman* ('work'), a noun referring to a general activity. This pattern is recurrent in other contexts where "di" marks engagement in social or occupational activities: war (*di alɛ*), hunting (*di kɔniɛn*), witchcraft (*di bae*), agriculture (*di bo; di fie*), fishing (*di nzue*), medicine (*di dɔɔtrɔ*), schooling (*di suklu*), solidarity (*di ngbli*), storytelling (*di ngua*), crafts (*di nun abaa*), and celebration (*di cɛn*).

In addition, "di" appears with more institutionalized activities, such as the army (10b), trade (*di aata*), or contracting (*di abusan*).

Function Sense of "di"

Beyond activities, "*di"* can denote a **function or role**. In (10c), it expresses the leadership position of being a chief. Similar uses include serving as a secretary or spokesperson (*di acanmin; di nyrun*) and acting as an intermediary (*di afiɛn*). Expression (10d) illustrates a special case where "di" signals identity through filiation: being one's father's heir. Here, the role is not an ongoing activity but of a kinship-based status.

Link to the Prototypical Sense of "di"

The activity/function sense of "*di"* connects to its prototypical meaning of **consumption** through the **CONTAINER schema**. In eating, food enters the body-as-container. By extension, engaging in an activity or function is construed as entering a social or institutional container. Baule expressions confirm this: assigning someone a job is expressed as "putting the person *in* the job" (*wla i junman nu*), while dismissal is "taking the person *out* of the job" (*be yi li i junman*

[3] Only representative examples are cited here; the complete set is available from the author upon request

nu). The CONTAINER schema is therefore the link between the prototypical meaning of "di" and its activity/function sense. This shows that although the activity/function sense of "*di"* is distinct from the consumption sense, both are connected through the same underlying image schema, thus exemplifying the polysemy of the verb.

3.2.2. Action Sense of "di"

There are many instances where "di" refers to the performance of some action. In some contexts, it describes a condition or a physical action. Consider the following examples:

(10) (a) Be di li blɔtrɔ ⟶ *They worked under duress during the colonial period*
/They/di/RESULT/forced
labor during the colonial period/

(b) Bakan-'n su di angleman ⟶ *The child is rolling around on the ground*
/child/DEF/PROG/di/roll/

Here, *di blɔtrɔ* describes an occupational condition while *di angleman* refers to the physical action of rolling on the ground. Comparable cases include repetitive actions (*di wlɔ*[4]*)* and social conditions *(di talua*[5]*).*

"Di" can also refer to an action describing a type of behavior as in the following illustrations:

(11) (a) ɔ di tutre ⟶ *He boasts*
/He/di/boast/

(b) Bakan-'n di li ndɛ'n nun wlɛwlɛ ⟶ *The child got involved in the discussion*
/Child/DEF/di/result/discussion/DEF/in/turbulence/

(c) ɔ su di ndrɔlɔ ⟶ *He is eating a dish with a lot of meat*
/He/PROG/di/eat a dish
with a lot of meat/

In (15), we have three types of action that relate to specific behaviors: social behavior (*di tutre*), personal behavior (*di wlɛwlɛ*) and consumption behavior (*di ndrɔlɔ*).

In some contexts, the same "di" evokes a spatial or a spiritual action:

(12) (a) be a di abu ⟶ *They met at the same place, arriving by different routes*
/They/RESULT/di/
Meet at the same place,
Arriving by different routes/

(b) Bla-'n di li jeliwa ⟶ *The woman has prophesied.*
/woman/DEF/di/result/prophesy/

In (1a), "di" evokes the spatial action of two persons meeting at the same place who arrived by different routes (*di abu*). By contrast, (1b) describes the spiritual action of predicting the future (*di jeliwa*).

In many other contexts, "di" expresses a relational action:

[4] to eat several dishes one after the other / to do several jobs one after the other)
[5] to live the life of a young girl, to make oneself beautiful

(13) (a) be su di aɔwi ⟶ *They are joking*
/They/PROG/di/joke
(b) ɔ di jɔlɛ ⟶ *He judges*
/He/di/trial/

Expressions (17a) and (17b) are just two cases where "di" expresses a relational action: in (17a), the action is cooperative while in (17b), it is influential. There are other comparable expressions where "di" refers to other types of relational actions: conflict (*di waka*[6]), communication (*di abla*[7]), sex (*di bian*[8]), and persuasion (*di wla*[9]).

The action sense of "di" connects to its literal prototypical meaning through the CONTAINER schema. Actions are conceptualized as bounded containers with boundaries at their initial and terminal points (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Talmy, 2000). In English, this is reflected in the expression "*to be engaged in an action*" where the actor is understood as being inside the event. Similarly, in Baule, when someone starts mocking or criticizing in an allusive way, one can say that he has entered this action (*ɔ a wlu asanse nun*[10]). In both languages, the logic of containment applies: the participant enters, remains within, and may exit the bounded space of the action. This conceptualization unifies the literal ingestion meaning of *di* ("to eat") with its action meanings, since in both cases something becomes internalized – either the physical food inside the body or the performer inside the action. The following diagram illustrates this mediation:

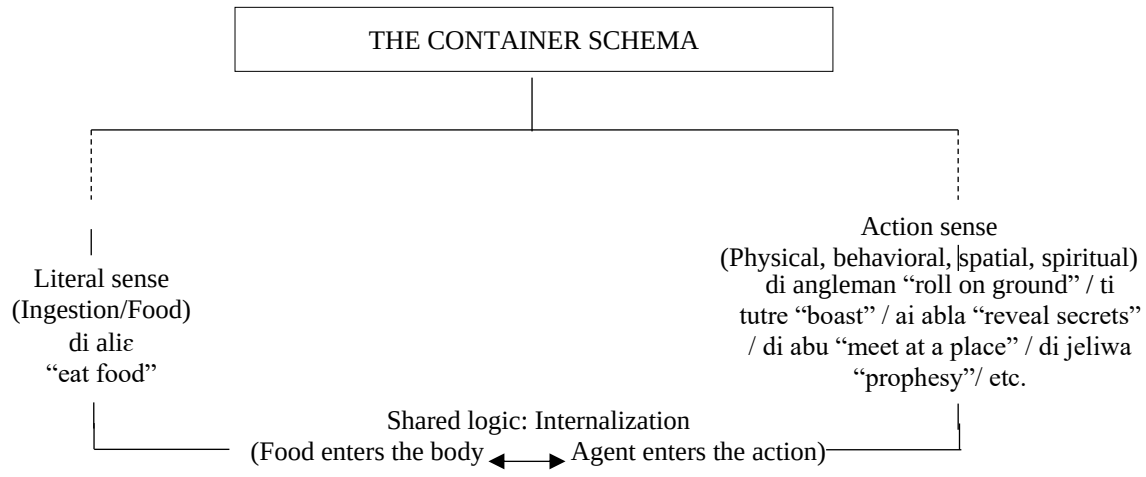

Figure 2: Schematized Representation of the Connection between the Literal Sense and the Action Sense of "di"

[6] to fight by throwing pieces of wood or sticks at each other
[7] to report, reveal a secret
[8] for a woman to have sexual relations with a man
[9] to persuade someone to do something
[10] This expression has the same meaning as "di asanse" which means to mock, to criticize in an allusive way.

3.2.3. State Sense of "di"

The corpus unveils a significant number of expressions where "di" expresses states. This state sense of "di" is the base of the following instances:

(14) (a) n klo man kɛ a di amlan ⟶ *I don't like it when you're sad*
/I/like/not/that/you/di/sad/

(b) ɔ di yalɛ ⟶ *He is poor*
/He/di/poverty/

(c) ɔ su di amganblalɛ ⟶ *It is rusting*
/It/RESULT/di/rust/

These instances describe three types of state: emotional (*di amlan*), economic (*di yalɛ*), and physical (*di amganblalɛ*). Other expressions reveal other types of state such as social (*di fɔwundi*[11]*, di bisua*[12]**),** occupational (*di ti*[13]) and ritual (*di angbeti*[14]*, di fɛwa*[15]).

The state sense of "di" also relates to the literal meaning through the CONTAINER schema. Since Lakoff and Johnson's seminal work, cognitive linguists have well established that states are conceptualized as containers not only in English but also in other languages (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Kövecses, 2005). In English, there are expressions such as "he is *in* love" or "he *fell into* a depression" that confirm the conceptualization of states in terms of container. In Baule, one can recover the containment idea by providing a synonym for the "di" expression. For example, to express the idea that a person is in poverty, one can say *ɔ di yalɛ* or *ɔ wo yalɛ nun (he is in poverty).* Similarly, one can say *ɔ di bisua (he is imprisoned)* or *ɔ wo bisua nun (he is in prison).* Equally, you can say about a happy person *ɔ di aklunjuɛ* or *ɔ wo aklunjuɛ nun (he is in happiness).* These examples show that states are conceptualized as containers in Baule as in English.

Given the CONTAINER schema, the state sense and the literal meaning converge at the same scene where one entity becomes internal to another entity. The ingested food becomes internal to the body as the person experiencing the state becomes internal to it. In state expressions, "di" schematically means "to be internal to" or "to be in".

The idea of internalization is helpful for grasping the conceptual difference between the following expressions, which carry the same meaning: *di amlan* and *wla bo*. Both of them mean, "to be sad". Thus, to say *Kuajo is sad*, one can say *Kuajo i wla-'n wa bo* or *Kuajo wa di amlan*. The difference between these two expressions depends on the conceptualization of "bo" and "di".

According to Kouadio (1998), the meaning of "bo" is the idea of something that is externalized or manifested. This meaning contrasts with the idea of internalization involved in the meaning of "di". This contrast is important to perceive the conceptual difference between *di amlan* and *wla bo*. Literally, *wla bo* means *hope that breaks*. Hope is conceptualized as a container and when the container breaks, hope is lost and the person becomes sad. On the contrary, *di amlan* presents sadness as a container that someone enters. When he enters the container, he is caught up in sadness. Thus, *wla bo* expresses sadness in terms of externalization because of the idea of

[11] To be in peace
[12] To be emprisoned
[13] to be completely occupied with an activity, absorbed by, immersed in...
[14] To be in a period of widowhood for a man or a woman.
[15] Mourning for a few days upon the death of one of the first three children

external orientation of "bo" while *di amlan* expresses sadness in terms of internalization because of the internal orientation of "di".

This difference based on the conceptualization of "bo" and "di" confirms the cognitive linguistics view that abstract domains such as emotions or social conditions are conceptualized through spatial schemas – in this case, containment (Langacker, 1987; Lakoff, 1987). Moreover, the contrast between di (internalization) and bo (externalization) shows that Baule provides fine-grained lexical evidence for different orientations in the conceptualization of states. The table below is a representation of this conceptual difference between *di amlan* and *wla bo*:

Tableau 1: Conceptualizations of Sadness with "bo" and "di" in Baule

Expression	Literal imagery	Conceptual orientation	Meaning
di amlan	Person enters container (sadness)	Internalization	To be sad
wla bo	Hope breaks, spilling out	Externalization	To be sad

3.2.4. Spatial Occupation Sense of "di"

The last contextual meaning of "di" that this study addresses is the occupation sense. Here, occupation means the fact of covering a space or a physical object. Consider these illustrations:

(15) (a) nzue'n di li fie'n ⟶ *The farm is flooded*
/water/DEF/di/RESULT/farm/DEF/

(b) Tannin-'n i ble-'n di li klanman ⟶ *The African wax print has been properly dyed blue*
/African wax print/DEF/POSS/bleue/DEF/di/RESULT/nice/

In (19a), "di" expresses the idea of water covering the whole surface of the farm (flooding). In (19b), "di" denotes the absorption of the print by the color blue. In other words, the color blue completely occupies the surface of the print. In both cases, we have an occupation sense because something X (water/blue color) occupies the surface of another thing Y (farm/wax print).

Again, the link between the occupation sense and the literal sense is a matter of containment through the activation of the CONTAINER schema. This schema is activated because the farm and the wax print are conceptualized as objects that can be taken into the substance occupying them. In case of flooding, when water covers the farm the latter becomes hidden by the former. Conceptually, it is as if the water has swallowed the farm so that it is now in the water. Equally, when a color covers a cloth, the cloth itself is no more directly visible; we see the cloth through the color. Here, too, one can say that the cloth is now in the color. Language marks this perceptual reality through the expression "in color", which suggests that color itself is conceptualized as a container. In short, the CONTAINER schema also applies to the occupation sense and connects it to the literal meaning of "di". This schema draws a parallel between the body as a container for food and water/color as containers for the farm/wax print.

4. Experiential Basis of the Polysemous Use of "di"

Experiential basis of metaphor-based extensions

We have seen throughout the analysis that the extension of the literal meaning of "di" to other domains grounds on specific cognitive mechanisms such as metaphors and image schemas. These mechanisms do not emerge accidentally but there are aspects of the socio-physical experience that legitimate their emergence and help to understand these mechanisms. Such experience is known as the experiential basis and according to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), this

basis is so important that cannot be ruled out. Therefore, it is essential to specify the experiential basis of the mechanisms involved in the semantic extension of "di".

Let us recall the mechanisms involved in the semantic extension of "di". One is metaphor and the other is image schema especially the CONTAINER schema. Concerning metaphors, some emerge from the direct experience of tasting and consuming; others come from the social practice of food sharing, which functions as a way of securing and reinforcing social relationships within the community.

Food tasting is mapped onto money spending because of the transaction role of money. As a medium of exchange, money is one of the primary means of acquisition of foods in society. Metonymically, money stands for food through a means-for-product relationship. This metonymy, which underpins the metaphor (MONEY IS FOOD) grounds on the logic that in Baule culture, the consumption of food products is construed as equivalent to the consumption of the financial means that served for the acquisition of that product. Thus, eating food is similar to eating the money that served to acquire that food. On this ground, money is conceptualized as something that can be eaten like food.

The projection of food onto time rests on the perception of both domains as limited resources (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Food is finite and so is time. Our embodied experience of food consumption its quantity reduces steadily until it reaches a level of emptiness. Similarly, in Baule culture, time is conceptualized as a substance that gradually diminishes as it is used. This metaphorical mapping is reflected in expressions such as: *blɛ-'n nga ɔ ka-'n ti kann* (there is still a short time left) or *mi blɛ-'n wa wie* (I have no time left). Baule people perceive a similarity between the tangible fact of food that diminishes gradually during consumption and the abstract reality of time spending which they perceive as a process during which the available amount of time diminishes until it finishes. This experiential basis underlies the metaphor **TIME IS FOOD**, which structures Baule conceptualizations of temporality.

The last metaphor, LIFE IS FOOD, originates from the mapping of the concrete sensory experience of tasting food onto the abstract domain of life enjoyment. The enjoyment of life consists of agreeable moments, but since feelings are abstract, they are commonly expressed through more tangible bodily experiences. In this specific case, Baule speakers draw on the pleasurable sensation of tasting food to express the positive experience of enjoying life. A similar experiential basis is observed in English where metaphors of taste are also recruited to speak about feelings – for instance, in the Coca Cola slogan "Taste the feeling". Thus, both Baule and English cultures share the conceptualization of life as food, even though they differ in their linguistic realizations of the metaphor.

To summarize, the metaphorical extensions of "di" are organized around three central mappings: MONEY IS FOOD, TIME IS FOOD, and LIFE IS FOOD. Each of these metaphors projects a specific aspect of the FOOD domain onto an abstract target, thereby creating a coherent network of conceptualizations grounded in embodied experience. Although the target domains differ – MONEY, TIME and LIFE, they all draw from the same source domain – FOOD – which establishes a unifying conceptual bond among them. Taken together, these metaphors convey distinct yet complementary insights into Baule cultural models: they underscore that food is not merely sustenance but a central and highly valued commodity through which other vital domains of human existence are understood.

Studies in Linguistics and Language Education
Volume 1 Issue 2 / December 2025

Experiential Basis of Schema-based Extensions

We have identified cases where the extension of the meaning of "di" is based on the CONTAINER schema: *the activity and function sense, the action sense, the state sense, and the occupation sense*. All these senses are organized around the notion of containment whereby activities, functions, actions, states and occupants are construed as containers.

Container schemas emerge from our perception of the human body as a bounded entity with an inside-outside orientation (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). We perceive the surface of our body as the boundary that separate us from the rest of the world. We see our bodies as containers and everything else as being outside the container. Then, we project this container schema to other entities with an inside-outside orientation and a bounding surface. Sometimes, we project this schema to entities with no clear in-out orientation and bounding surface. For instance, Baule speakers impose this containment schema to non-tangible realities – activities, functions, actions, states, and occupations – with no clear identification of bounding and in-out orientation. In this culture, any engagement with each of these entities is conceptualized as being in a container. This shows a similarity between the functioning of the CONTAINER schema in Baule and English, an argument in favor of the universality of this schema.

Several senses of "*di" – the activity sense, the function sense, the action sense, the state sense, and the occupation* sense – can be explained through the **CONTAINER schema**. In each case, these domains are construed metaphorically as containers.

The CONTAINER schema itself arises from embodied experience where the human body is perceived as a bounded entity with an inside-outside orientation (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). The body's surface functions as a boundary that separates us from the external world, giving rise to the conceptualization of the body as a container and everything else as outside it. This bodily schema is then extended to other entities with identifiable boundaries, and even to abstract domains without clear physical limits. In Baule, activities, functions, actions, states, and occupations – though intangible – are metaphorically structured as containers, such that engaging in them is conceptualized as being "inside" them. This projection demonstrates the flexibility of the CONTAINER schema and suggests a universality in human cognition: the same schema operates in both Baule and English, though it is expressed differently across languages and cultures. Figure 3 is an illustration of the semantic extensions of "di".

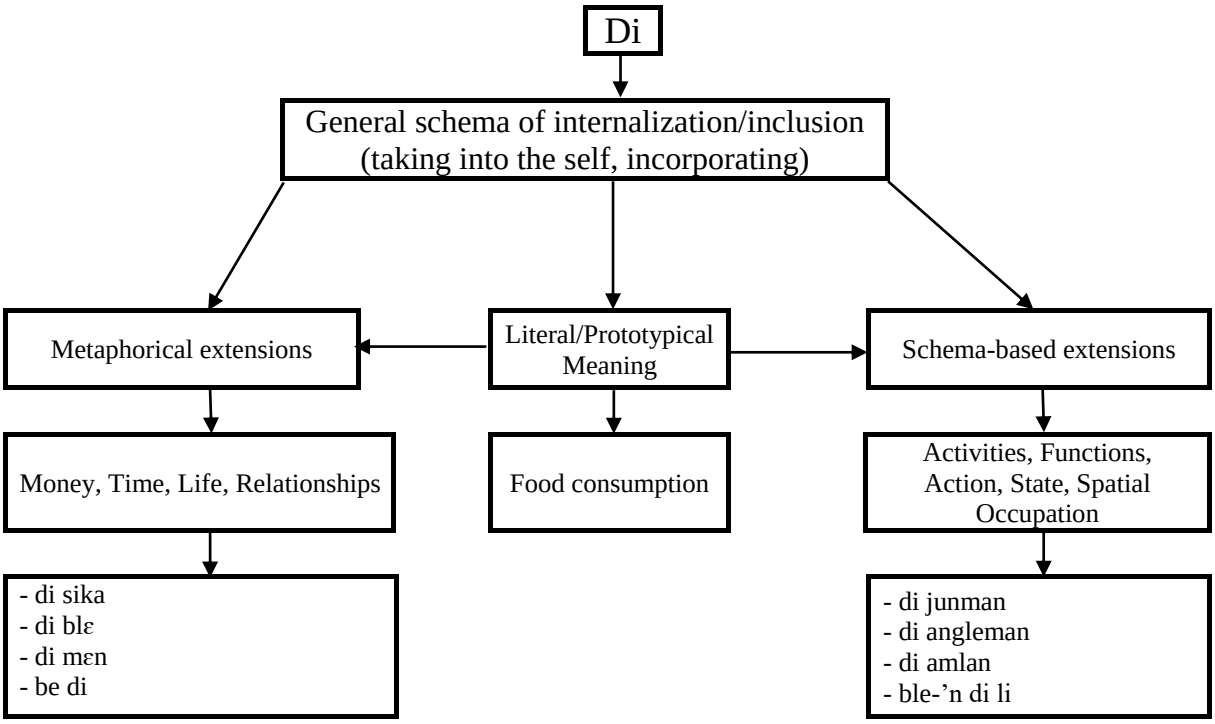

Figure 3: Schematic Representation of the Polysemous Extensions of "di"

Conclusion

This study has examined the polysemy of "di" in Baule, uncovering its general schematic meaning as internalization or inclusion. This schema underlies the prototypical sense of food consumption and motivates extensions across diverse domains, including money, time, life, relationships, activities, states, and spatial occupation. These extensions are enabled by metaphorical mappings and the CONTAINER schema, demonstrating how embodied experience structures meaning. The findings contribute in two ways. First, they document metaphors in Baule that differ from those typically reported in classical cognitive linguistics, thereby enriching cross-linguistic evidence for conceptual metaphor theory. Second, they highlight the cultural salience of food as a conceptual anchor in Baule, shaping not only everyday consumption but also abstract domains such as time, wealth, and social relations. Future research could compare these findings to other Akan and West African languages to understand similarities and variations across these languages concerning the functioning of polysemy, and elaborate on the role of metaphors and schemas in the organization of polysemous systems.

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