

A Comparative Study of Naming Practices in Two Settlements: Mpuluzi and Metfule in Mpumalanga Province – An Onomastic Approach

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ABSTRACT The objective of this study seeks to compare and survey how names are bestowed to individuals in Siswati culture. The analysis also focuses on the relationship between naming and certain aspects of life that influence naming. This includes the birth names, religion, family conditions and frictions between family members, commemorative names, natural phenomena and influence by political struggles. The study further investigates how days of the week, names of the months and marriage contributes towards naming. The personal names are analysed, specifically how they are grammatically formed by considering the number of syllables, semantic, morphological, double, contradictory markings and unmarked names. The personal names appear to be in polarity of short and long, positive and negative meanings, simple and compound, ideal and real. The comparative approach reflects name-giving process in two settlements: Mpuluzi and Metfule and further gives more explanation and interpretation of similarities and differences in naming practices.

INTRODUCTION

Name-giving in African cultures can be prompted by a range of social, religious and cultural circumstances during the birth of a child. The aspect of name-giving is significant because it is related to the circumstances surrounding the birth, social aspects of the family, hopes and wishes for the child, or the expression of gratitude to a deity. Most African names are of historical importance, as they generally refer to some event in the social history of the family or clan. The naming process is a continuum that has never been disturbed since it began. In fact, naming is so intimately linked with the history of the human race and its mastery over the environment by which it is surrounded. In the study of naming processes in Northern Malawi, Moyo (1996: 12) described the process of the naming of the child as follows:

When it came to personal names, the Ngoni and the Tumbuka followed Ngoni cultural practices in that the fathers and the grandfathers of the husband's family become the sole name-givers. The name given to the child carried with it great significance within the larger family, with the result that the personality of the child was

seldom the focus of his or her name. Ngoni patrilineal culture played a dominant role while the child's maternal side played no role in name-giving, except in exceptional cases where lobola may not have been paid in full; invariably power was vested in the father as head of the family.

The above information describes how women were neglected in the naming process in the Ngoni culture:

The term, anthroponym refers to names of human beings. In the African Societies, naming follows a particular pattern. The bestowal of names is done at various stages of development in the life of an individual. The babyhood name is used for the formal introduction and acceptance of a baby into the family. A person acquires a new name and status to denote the new level attained, which shows that he or she is a new person (Monnig 1967).

Giving a name has always been an interesting process. Different cultures have different naming process. Naming in some cultures cannot be separated from the society where the naming process takes place; for example, social surroundings influencing the choice of a particular name given to an entity. Kgatla (1982: 2) maintained that:

Possession of a name is, and has been from time immemorial, the privilege of every human being.

Ullmann (1962: 71) added that:

No one, whether of low or high degree, goes nameless once he has come to the world.

All names have meanings, even though people may not be aware of such meanings. The naming of a child is a very interesting and significant practice among Africans. Over the ages it has been practised differently by different societies. It is a common practice that when a baby is born, the elders usually determine the name that the child may be given. At a later stage, the child may be given a European name, which often happens during his or her baptism. However, he goes further to state that the European name will usually appear alongside the African name in the identity document, birth certificates and other related official documents.

After birth, a baby is kept in-doors for a month after which a special ritual for introducing it to the ancestors is performed. A goat is slaughtered for the ancestors and a child is given a name and then introduced to the ancestors. The goat's skin is given to the mother to use for carrying the baby. Each name has its own meaning and it suits a particular situation which can be in the family, society or at national level. Turner (2008: 66) commented about the naming practice as follows:

Names reflecting censure, disapproval and discontent serve an important social function in Nguni society in that they are used to minimise friction and express frustration. Names containing cryptic social messages perform several functions: they enable a person about whom defamatory allegations have been made to refute these accusations and attempt to clear his or her name; they may simply serve to expose, accuse, mock, warn challenge the underlying reason or cause of the friction; they serve as a means of working out tension and frustration by affording the namer the possibility of passing an indirect yet effective comment in an environment where direct confrontation and conflict are not only inadmissible, but also socially unacceptable.

Naming is a profound category of every society. Naming process is given direction by the cultural events, beliefs and traditions of the society. A name in Swazi society is highly regarded and the name given to a child is linked to some

person, event, or the character the parents want the child to develop. The central belief is that names determine the destiny of those who carry them. The child may be named after a deceased grandfather or grandmother, if the child is a girl or after any national or clan hero who may not be related to him or her. It is believed that the spirit of that ancestor, after whom the child is named, will possess it and that the child will inherit the qualities of the ancestor. At other times the name given to a child may be determined by the circumstances surrounding its birth.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The qualitative research and comparative approach are adopted for this research work. Daiches (1984: 251) saw comparative approach as:

A device for establishing degree of excellence and indeed it can be maintained that a purely normative criticism, which aims at giving so many marks to each work and placing it in a scale, cannot go very far without having brought together the work in question with other works, showing this helping the reader to see how excellence is attained.

For the above assertion, it is evident that the comparative approach helps the researcher in comparing and verifying information given by respondents. Seeing that this study involves people of different ages, status and geographical locations, the comparative approach are selected for the study, Prawer (1973: 163) remarked that:

The comparative approach is an effective method through which one can trace movements and transformation of ideas, while at the same time widening the narrow experiences to which our existence in space and time condemn us by opening up for our emotional and intellectual enrichment, a vast storehouse of imaginative experience.

For the purpose of this research work, this method is employed as it focuses on the subjective experiences of individuals. Creswell (1994: 2) defined qualitative investigation as follows:

An enquiry process of understanding a social human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in natural setting.

The strength of the qualitative paradigm is that it allows a researcher to study people in terms of their own definitions of the world. In other words, it affords the researcher the opportunity to probe into a person's attitudes, biases, hopes and aspirations. The personal names that are looked at in this research work were supplied by respondents from Mpuluzi and Metfule settlements. The two settlements' names come from the rivers that pass through the settlements, South East of Mpumalanga Province. The respondents that were interviewed were males 17-24 years old, that is, of the Swazi stage of growth called *emajele* (boys of 10-17 years) and *emajaha* (boys of 17-24 years). The female respondents were girls 16-18 years old, called *tingabisa* and 18-24 years old, called *tingcugce*.

The primary research method is a method whereby first-hand information is obtained from respondents. The present researcher gathered facts, opinions and personal views from members of the society. Different types of questions were used in the interviews. The interview creates a situation which makes the interviewer to choose appropriate questions instead of writing them in advance (Bailey 1978: 174). The interviewer included, amongst others, the following questions:

- ♦ What is a name?
- ♦ What do you learn from these names?
- ♦ Do names communicate with you? What do they say?
- ♦ Can you say names are mirror of society?
- ♦ Do you think that names need to be changed? Why do you think so?
- ♦ What suggestions can you give with regard to name in general?

Theoretical Framework

What is a name? A dictionary would define a 'name' as a word by which a person is known. If you subtly change the wording of the question and ask yourself what is in the name? You suddenly find yourself leaving the realms of real world and entering the ideal world, which is a rich myriad of meanings and associations, historical personages, snatches of music, image of paintings and passages of literature. Apart from life itself, the most fundamentally important gift that parents can bestow upon their new born child is its name. The name identifies and defines identity which is a requirement through-

out the lifespan of an individual. Some cultures endow names with such power that their members are given one for everyday use and a second, a secret name that is believed to contain the essence of the individuals' bearer and must never be divulged to strangers for fear of giving them the means to establish absolute control over him or her. Will a child's name prove a blessing or a curse? Will its name help this new person to enjoy an easy passage as it sets sail on the unpredictable waters of life, or will it throw up rocky obstacles in the form of countless self-esteem-sapping, humiliations? Indeed, a name is so inextricably bound up with its bearer's sense of identity, and with how others see him or her, that an ill-considered selection may have life-long repercussions.

Names can, of course, be changed, be it by recourse to a nickname, a second name or even a completely new one, yet the original name will continue to live on in other people's memories. You find a person stoically endured being called by a much loathed first name throughout his or her school years, but on entering a new phase of her life, which involves moving to different towns and making new acquaintances, has no qualms about discarding it and replacing it with his or her second name. When choosing a name for their baby, apart from avoiding names that have been tainted by infamous namesakes, there are few other potential pitfalls that parents should be aware of. A sequence of name, whose initials would spell out a word for which their child would be mocked and have offensive connotations in other cultures, should be totally avoided.

In the end, however, the name that is chosen for a child will be one that sounds pleasing to parents, although it will probably reflect the conventions, values and belief that prevailed at the time of the baby's birth. There are countries where parents are still required to select a name from a legally approved list. If a delightful-sounding name also has personal significance for the parents, then a child will be blessed and probably be enthralled to learn the origin, or a notable bearer, of his or her name. A wealth of notable namesakes will not only send prospective parents on a nostalgic voyage of rediscovery through long forgotten aspects of their past, but offers a gallery of interesting figures from history and the arts to illustrate the potential of a name. Although they should not be regarded

as role models and some are more notorious than notable, they will certainly act as illuminating starting points. Also included are characters drawn from fiction and legend, along with venerable figures from numerous mythological traditions and such world religions.

OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

The natural world is another rich source of names, from the jewel and flower names, through names that evoke the sterling qualities of various birds and beasts, to sunny or tempestuous-sounding names inspired by weather phenomena and thence to the celestial realms of the stars. Time and space can provide additional inspiration, such as names based on the date, day or season when your baby made its world debut or the place where it was conceived or born. Other potential naming possibilities include the child's appearance and within these pages one finds names that, for instance, echo the dark, golden or ginger descriptions of a person's crowning glory as well as their behavioural characteristics, be they gentle or spirited. There is no limit to the human imagination. Therefore, the key to finding the perfect name for a baby could be an evocative name, perhaps a first name already borne by a family member or a cherished friend. The name that sounds attractive or one that celebrates one's baby's cultural or national heritage is recommended.

The Grammatical Marking Discourse

In looking at the difference between male and female personal names in Siswati, we should consider the following: semantic marking, morphological marking, double marking, contradictory marking and unmarked names.

Semantic Marking

Names that are semantically marked are those derived from nouns which themselves have male or female meaning. Clearly, if the name Babe is derived from the noun babe ("Father"), then Babe must be a male's name.

The names of the boys that are semantically marked 'male' include the following:

- *Melusi* <*umelusi* (herd-boy)
- *Khehla* <*likhehla* (old man)
- *Makhosi* <*emakhosi* (chiefs)

The names that are semantically marked 'female' include the following:

- *Ntfombi* <*intfombi* (girl)
- *Makhosatane* <*emakho satane* (girls)
- *Salukati* <*salukati* (old woman)
- The names that are nouns and semantically neutral in terms of sex marking are the following:
- *Nhlanhla* <*inhlanhla* (luck)
- *Mbokodvo* <*imbokodvo* (grinding stone)
- *Ntfokoto* <*intfokoto* (happiness)

Morphological Marking

Certain morphemes (prefixes, suffixes) have become specifically associated with either the male or the female sex when used in personal names. The prefixes-*so-* and *lo-* without doubt mark male names and female names respectively. Certain boys' names ending with *-ile* have always been acceptable, such as *Mfanufikile* (a boy has arrived) which obviously refers to a boy. The simple name *Fikile* ([a child] has arrived), however, is marked as female, as are the names:

- *Sibongile* (we are grateful)
- *Duduzile* (having comforted)
- *Khanyisile* (she has lit up)

The names marked as female are those with the passive perfect suffix *-iwe*, as in the following names:

- *Bukiwe* (having been looked)
- *Busisiwe* (having been blessed)
- *Khetsiwe* (having been chosen)

The marking female names are the neuter perfect suffix, as given below:

- *Bonakele* (being visible)
- *Sitakele* (being helpful)
- *Tfolakele* (being available)

Certain verbal structures are restricted to male names, and as a result they become male markers.

- *Mbangeni* (dispute him)
- *Mbukeni* (look at him)
- *Mtsandzeni* (love him)

Another verbal structure which is restricted to male names and thus becomes a morphological marker is the structure **M** + verb root + passive **-wa** (often with the Applied Extension; it becomes **M** + verb root + **el** + **wa**). Here are the numbers of male names with this structure are provided:

- *Mbhekisiswa* (the carefully watched one)
- *Mhawukelwa* (the pitied one)
- *Mnikelwa* (the one who is given things)

Male names using a variety of compound structures are common. Without giving exhaustive lists, of a number of different structures the following can serve as examples:

VERB + POSSESSIVE: *Sengatakhe* (milk his cow) [*senga* + *takhe*]

VERB + PRONOUN: *Tsatsatonkhe* (take everything) [*tsatsa* + *tonkhe*]

VERB + VERB: *Phumasilwe* (come out and let us fight) [*phuma* + *silwe*]

NOUN + POSSESSIVE: *Bukhosibakhe* (his chieftaincy) [*bukhosi* + *bakhe*]

NOUN + ADVERB: *Mfanafutsi* (another boy is born) [*mfana* + *futsi*]

NOUN + ADJECTIVE: *Mfanalomkhulu* (big boy) [*umfana* + *lomkhulu*]

NOUN + RELATIVE: *Nkunzilebovu* (red bull) [*inkunzi* + *lebovu*]

Double Marking

Some Siswati personal names are doubly marked for sex. Take, for example the name, *Lontfombi*, which includes both the morphological marker **-lo-** and the semantic marker **intfombi**. The name, *Lontfombifikile* has both *intfombi* and the perfect tense suffix **-ile**.

A compound with a lexical marker will be doubly marked, such as, *Mfanalomhlophe* (light-skinned boy). So too would be a name such as, *Sokhehla*, with the morphological marker **-so-** and the lexical marker *likhehla* (old man).

Contradictory Marking

Some personal names have markers which conflict, as in *Mfanufikile* (a boy has arrived), where the lexical marker *umfana* contradicts the female marker **-ile**. In such a case, it is clear that the lexical marker overrides the morphological marker, as there is no way this name could be regarded as female. The power of such a lexical marker over morphological markers is seen in compound names such as *Ntfombikayise* (girl of her father). Compound structure, as we have pointed out above exclusively male, unless the lexical marker *intfombi* is included. Some names with conflicting markers are used. For example, the hypothetical name *Sontfombi*, with the con-

flicting **-so-** and *intfombi*, *Somabele* (breast), *Sotidziya* (apron), *Lomabhebha* (loin-skin).

Unmarked Names

There are few personal names in the Siswati naming system that are not marked for sex, and so can be used for either males or females. These are the names which are the verbs based on the simple dictionary meaning and form. The examples are the following:

- *Hlonipha* (respect)
- *Phika* (deny, refuse)
- *Jabula* (be happy)

Respondents of Girls from Table 1 A: Mpuluzi

The first two personal names of girls are formed by two-syllabled words. The following seven names are three-syllabled words, while the last five personal names are formed by five syllables words. The succeeding six personal names are four-syllabled words, while the last five personal names are formed by five-syllabled words. What is evident about the personal names that are collected from the respondents of Mpuluzi is that, fifty percent begin with the feminine formative **Lo-** (**la+u**). The personal name, *Tsandvolwetfu*, that is, *lutsandvo* (love) and *lwetfu* (ours) is a compound word, which is formed by a noun and a possessive. The compoundness of the two personal names, *Lomahl-okohloko* (Weaver birds) and *Lotivunguvungu* (Whirlwinds) are brought by the repetition of ideophones, while for the personal name *Lomagalagala* (Branches) they are nouns.

Respondents of Girls from Table 1 B: Metfule

The first two personal names of girls are two-syllabled words. The following six personal names are three-syllabled words. The seven personal names are four-syllabled words. The next three personal names are five-syllabled words, while the last one is six-syllabled word.

If we compare the personal names of the girls in Mpuluzi and Metfule, we discover the following:

There are twenty respondents from each settlement that provided their actual personal names. It is noted that for fifty percent of the respondents from each settlement, their personal names begin with the feminine formative **Lo-**. The personal names that are commonly found

Table 1: Personal names of girls in Mpuluzi and Metfule settlements

A: Mpuluzi			B: Metfule		
1.	Buhle	(Beauty)	1.	Buhle	(Beauty)
2.	Gugu	(Treasure)	2.	Gugu	(Treasure)
3.	Khulile	(You have grown up)	3.	Tanele	(Enough)
4.	Tjeliwe	(The one who is told)	4.	Lomtfunti	(Shadow)
5.	Khangile	(Attractor)	5.	Khangile	(Attractor)
6.	Lomvula	(Rain)	6.	Lufuto	(Heredity)
7.	Lomusa	(Mercy)	7.	Losipho	(Gift)
8.	Lutsandvo	(Love)	8.	Khonjiwe	(The pointed one)
9.	Lomvuzo	(Reward)	9.	Lonhlanhla	(Fortune)
10.	Lomatsemb	a (Hope)	10.	Lomatsemba	(Hope)
11.	Lomphucuko	(civilization)	11.	Jabulile	(Happiness)
12.	Hluphekile	(Sufferer)	12.	Busisiwe	(Blessing)
13.	Lomatsemba	(Trustworth)	13.	Lomasontfo	(Sunday)
14.	Tsandvolwetfu	(Our love)	14.	Lomthandazo	(Prayer)
15.	Lotivuno	(Harvest)	15.	Lotivuno	(Harvest)
16.	Lomahloko	(Weaver birds)	16.	Lomibango	(Feuds)
17.	Lotivunguvungu	(Whirlwinds)	17.	Lomalungelo	(Rights)
18.	Lotimangaliso	(Amazement)	18.	Lomphumelelo	(Success)
19.	Samukelisiwe	(We are given)	19.	Lomangeleti	(Water)
20.	Lomagagalagala	(Branches)	20.	Lotivunguvungu	(Whirlwinds)

Table 2: Personal names of boys in Mpuluzi and Metfule settlements

A: Mpuluzi			B: Metfule		
1.	Lwati	(Knowledge)	1.	Nsingo	(Razor)
2.	Mvulo	(Monday)	2.	Mvulo	(Monday)
3.	Nhlanhla	(Blessing)	3.	Mandla	(Strength)
4.	Sipho	(Gift)	4.	Sipho	(Gift)
5.	Msiti	(Helper)	5.	Nhlaba	(Aloe)
6.	Nsika	(Pillar)	6.	Mabelwa	(Allottee)
7.	Maphahla	(Twins)	7.	Magala	(Branches)
8.	Melusi	(Shepherd)	8.	Sicongo	(Apex)
9.	Mabutfo	(Regiment)	9.	Melusi	(Shepherd)
10.	Butjoki	(Arrow)	10.	Ntsandzane	(Orphan)
11.	Jabulani	(Happy)	11.	Nhlangano	(Association)
12.	Nshisekelo	(Anxiety)	12.	Libhudlo	(Waterfall)
13.	Bhimbidvwane	(January)	13.	Mabutfo	(Regiment)
14.	Vulandlela	(Pathfinder)	14.	Vukutfu	(Speckled rock pigeon)
15.	Nhlakanipho	(Wisdom)	15.	Sivuno	(Harvest)
16.	Lungiselelo	(Arrangement)	16.	Hloko	(Weaver-bird)
17.	Siciniseko	(Assurance)	17.	Jabulani	(Happy)
18.	Vovoliyakhapha	(Liar)	18.	Sivunguvungu	(Whirlwind)
19.	Goboluphonjwana	(Overturner)	19.	Makadzebona	(Experienced person)
20.	Mashayandzawonye	(Famine)	20.	Sidvwaladvwala	(Pompous person)

Table 3: Syllable structure of girls in Mpuluzi and Metfule

Mpuluzi			Metfule		
Number of syllables	Personal names	Percentage	Number of syllables	Personal names	Percentage
2	2	10	2	2	10
3	7	35	3	6	30
4	6	30	4	7	35
5	5	25	6	3	15
-			6	1	5
	20	100		20	100

from both settlements are Buhle (Beauty), Gugu (Treasure), Khangile (Attractor), Lomatsemba (Hope), Lotivuno (Harvest) and Lotivunguvungu (Whirlwinds). The statistical analyses of syllable structure are seen in Table 3.

The personal name, Lomangeleti (water) is a euphemistic word for Lomanti (water) which is bestowed and used for special events.

Respondents of Boys from Table 2 A: Mpuluzi

The first six personal names of boys are two-syllabled words. The next four personal names are three-syllabled words. The succeeding five personal names are four-syllabled words. The two personal names that are following the above mentioned are five-syllabled words. The last three personal names are six-syllabled words.

Respondents of Boys from Table 2 B: Metfule

The first five personal names are two-syllabled words. The following ten personal names are three-syllabled words. The next two personal names are four-syllabled words. The last three personal names are five-syllabled words. If we compare the personal names of the boys from the two settlements, that is, Mpuluzi and Metfule, we discover the following differences and similarities:

There are twenty respondents from each settlement that gave their actual personal names. The common personal names that are in the two settlements are Mvulo (Monday), Sipho (Gift), Melusi (Shepherd), Mabutfo (Regiments) and Jabulani (Happy). The compound personal names that are polysyllabic are: Vulandlela (Path finder), Vovoliyakhapha (Liar), Gobaluphonjwana (Overturner), Mashayandzawonye (Famine), Hloko hloko (Weaver-bird), Sivunguvungu (Whirlwind), Makadzebona (Experienced person)

and Sidvwaladvwala (Pompous person). The statistical analyses according to the syllables that formed the personal names are seen in Table 4.

CONCLUSION

From the aforementioned observations, it was noted that the name-giving process is a significant exercise which needs time and prior discussions. The personal names can be grouped as follows: semantic marking, morphological marking, double marking, contradictory marking and unmarked names. In addition, not all names reflect positivity; for example: Hluphekile (Sufferer), Lomibango (feuds), Ntsandzane (orphan), Sidvwaladvwala (pompous person), Vovoliyakhapha (liar) and Mashayandzawonye (famine). The less the number of personal names that are bestowed with negative connotations, the greater the awareness and consciousness in name-giving process. It is vital to assess all the options so that one's final selection is the one that one feels is right and it will be carried throughout the child's life.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the people who are engaged in name-giving process must take note of the following facts: The more popular the name one selects, the greater the number of other children who will share the name. The more unusual the name one selects, the more potential for mispronunciation or misspelling. Some names can be given to both girls and boys and one might prefer a name which is gender-specific. Spellings of these names vary considerably. One must therefore, choose a spelling one is happy with and one which is least likely to be confusing to others. Names from countries or

Table 4: Syllables structure of boys in Mpuluzi and Metfule

<i>Mpuluzi</i>			<i>Metfule</i>		
<i>Number of syllables</i>	<i>Personal names</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Number of syllables</i>	<i>Personal names</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
2	6	30	2	5	25
3	4	20	3	10	50
4	5	25	4	2	10
5	2	10	5	3	15
6	3	15	-	-	-
	20	100		20	100

cultures other than one's own are increasingly common and offer some excellent choices. However, one should make sure the pronunciation does not cause problems in one's indigenous language. Most people make selections of names in advance for either boys or girls. Therefore, the scope should be made broader to both sexes. It is significant to note there are no specific rules that govern the abbreviation of personal names. It is the right of an individual to select the syllables that he or she feels pronounceable and not confusing, and discard others.

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