An Explication of Personal Names in Siswati Society of Msholozi Settlement: An Anthroponomastic Approach

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Abstract: *Personal names are powerful indicators of perceptions between gender roles and categories. Naming practice entails compounds, syllable-driven and semantico-referential functions. They reflect the whole spectrum of life by touching traditional and contemporary aspects, indigenous and exotic inclinations, as well as variety of themes. The bestowal of names goes with expectations, ambitions and aspirations. It reflects what the parents are yearning for about the future of their children. The naming practices are looked at from cultural, thematic and genderlects views. They depict polarities of explicit and implicit, overt and covert, positive and negative meanings. An anthroponymic system is connected with perceptions of identity in society. Personal names can be ligama lasekhaya (home name or primary name) or ligama lesilungu (Euro-western name or secondary name). The first name is given to a child within few days of birth, by either or both of parents, occasionally by grandparent or other close family member. This may be considered the real personal name. A child is given more than one personal name, especial if each parent has strong reason for choosing a particular name. There is always a reason for choosing a particular name, and the reason is always linked to the underlying meaning of the name, in contrast to most Euro-western societies where the reason for giving the name is seldom linked to the underlying meaning. It is an anthroponomastic study that is informed by both functional and interpretive approaches.*

Keywords: *anthroponymic system, contemporary aspects, exotic inclination, genderlects, gender roles and onomastic approach.*

I. Introduction

Personal names are onomastic topics that are broadly handled by social anthropologists, sociolinguistics and philosophers. They are, however, explicated in various perspectives. Hall (1981:1452) says that:

When we explicate a literary work we unfold its intricate layers of theme and form.

The word, explication means unfolding. It explicitly explains the work that is dense and concentrated, taking it word to word or line by line. An explication needs a certain logical order to prevent it from becoming artificial or mere drudgery. The presentation of ideas begin with the exact formal views and move to the speculative or formal submissions. It includes both conventional and unconventional interpretations of the discourse. It is a synthesised totally examination of art. It needs a certain pattern: moving from simple to complex aspects, from easy to difficult, from usual to unusual, from standard to rhetorical-style to peculiar rhetorical style. Although, explication concentrates on finer details it overlooks the basic and literal meaning of the text. It is formal and close analysis of a text elucidating structure, content and style. Anthroponyms is the term that comes from a Greek word, *Anthropos.* It covers personal names, nicknames and surname. For this study, the former aspect is selected for analysis. An anthroponymic system refers to the different sets and types of names given by members of a particular society to themselves and to the other member of society, and to the way in which these names interact with each other and with a certain social aspects, such as the status, age and sex of the name bearer. The rationale of this study is to provide a broader understanding of the personal names, to identify and outline their similarities from structural to functional view. Crystal (1987:12) contends that:

The science that studies personal names is known as onomastics, usually divided into the study of personal names (anthroponomastics) and place names (toponomastics).

It is however, a general known that the former mentioned study uses onomastics, while the latter uses toponymy.

II.   The Statement Of The Problem

❖ The bestowal of personal names is done, but its process, functions and meaning is not systematically explained.
❖ Personal name are cultural aspects that are not quantitatively researched in Siswati language, therefore, a distinctive attention is needed.
❖ They reflect the whole spectrum of life by touching traditional and contemporary aspects, but the minimal formal teaching and learning on onomastics is undertaken.

III.   Research Methodology And Theoretical Underpinning

Personal names are collected for onomastic perspective from a settlement called Msholozi, west of Mbombela Metropolitan City. The word, Msholozi is a clan praise of Zuma clan. It was named after the former South Africa's state president, Jacob Zuma. The verb, *sholoza* means to stand aloof, be unsociable or act in a preoccupied manner. Research methodology refers to the process design and strategies of inquiry for data collection. (Silver 2005) There are twenty respondents that are used as a target group for providing fifty males and fifty females' personal names. They are selected according to Martin and Nakayama (2013:52) assertions of both functional and interpretive approaches. The former approach identifies culture variations and differences, while the latter emphasises the communication and cultural contexts.

The foundations of functionalist theory were laid by the French sociologist, Emile Durkheim (1858-1917). He wrote extensively on the subject when formal education, as we know it today, it was its infancy. One of the major themes that Durkheim explored in his writings was the relationship between the development of education and the changing needs for society.

IV.   THE RESEACH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study are the following:

❖ To define the personal names for broader understanding of their nature.
❖ To outline personal names according to identifiable categories.
❖ To explain and interpret the significances of their meaning.

V.   Research Questions

The research questions that are essential in unpacking the statement of the problem are the following:

❖ Why are the personal names defined?
❖ How are the personal name outlined?
❖ What are the significances of explaining and interpreting their meaning?

VI.   Literature Review

Moyo (1996:12) describes the process of the naming a child as following:

> *When it came to personal names, the Ngoni and Tumbuka followed Ngoni cultural practice in that the father and the grandfather of the husband's family become sole and 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.*

Thwala (2015:14) gives his views as follows:

> *The personal names are looked at how they are grammatically formed by considering the number of syllables, semantic, morphologically, contradictory markings and unmarked names.*

All personal names have their own specific meanings, even though people may not be aware of them. Naming a child is not an easy task, therefore it needs thinking. It is an interesting practice that is significant among Africans. Is has been practiced by various societies.   It is a common and acceptable practice that when a baby is born, the elders determine the name of the child. The second name whether European or baptism followed. However, the European name appears alongside the African name in official documents. Personal naming is a profound category of all societies. For as long as there has been culture, people have placed semantic value by naming every event, place, personal traits and animate phenomena.

Kgatla (1982) in his study of *Names of Characters in Novels,* maintain that the names bestowed on people are influenced by certain factors. He mentions that people may be named according to circumstances of birth, named after somebody and named according to deeds. He further expresses on how names are given to people.

The researcher will employ the preceding theory, of Kgatla (1982) in order to find out if there are names that were influence by the above factors.

Sebashe (2003) in his study of *Place Renaming in the Limpopo Province,* states that names are usually given by those in the positions of power and authority. With regard to personal names, for instance, in a family, paternal grandparents are traditional names-givers. Sebashe (2003:25) further points out that:

> *There are, however, a variety of influences that operate in the naming of a child. These include events that happened during the time of birth, religion, political influence, and also the expectations of the parents on their offspring.*

Sethosa in her attempt in the study of *The Structure and Functions of the Nicknames in Sesotho sa Leboa,* to identify an individual, and perform a particular function. In this regard she categorised nick names as follows:

VII.   RESULTS

The respondents gave the personal names of the males and females. The names are given in Siswati language with their equivalent English meanings. It is noted that they are all home or primary names. They are, however, classified according to the various selected categories which are themes, syllables and miscellaneous objects. It is not a static option of categorisation that the researcher needs to adhere to, but this is an operational one which fits this research work.

VIII.   Personal name reflecting miscellaneous objects

Personal names on weapons

Males

- *Lijozi -Jozi* (Large long-bladed spear)
- *Inhlendla –Hlendla* (Barbed spear with a short shank for hunting)
- *Sijula –Sijula* (Narrow-bladed spear)

Females

- *Lomajozi* (Mother of large long-bladed spear)
- *Lotinhlendla* (Mother of barbed spear)
- *Lotijula* (Mother of narrowed-bladed spear)

Personal names on basketry and pottery

Males

- *Sihlanti* (Grass-woven mat)
- *Ludziwo* (Earthenware pot)
- *Mcenge* (Milking vessel)

Females

- *Lotihlanti* (Mother of small grass-woven mats)
- *Lotindziwo* (Mother of earthenware pots)
- *Lomicenge* (Mother of milking vessels)

Personal names on vegetables

Males

- *Lithapha* (Edible tuber)
- *Mkhiwa* (Fig tree)
- *Jikijolo* (Blackberry)

Females

- ❖ *Lomathapha* (Mother of edible tubers)
- ❖ *Lomakhiwa* (Mother of fig trees)
- ❖ *Lomajikijolo* (Mother of blackberries)

It is discovered that to all selected examples of personal names reflecting the miscellaneous objects are given in gender pairs. All the female personal names are beginning with the feminine prefix Lo-.

Personal name reflecting syllables

Two-syllabic personal names

Female

- ❖ *Ntfombi* (Girl)
- ❖ *Tetfu* (Ours)
- ❖ *Buhle* (beauty)

Males

- ❖ *Musa* (Mercy)
- ❖ *Lifa* (Wealth)
- ❖ *Themba* (trust)

Three-syllabic personal names

Females

- ❖ *Ntfonjana* (Little girl)
- ❖ *Lindelwa* (Waited for)
- ❖ *Lahliwe* (Deserted one)

Males

- ❖ *Macebo* (Skills)
- ❖ *Mandletfu* (Our strength)
- ❖ *Mancoba* (Conquers)

Four-syllable personal names

Females

- ❖ *Busisiwe* (Blessed)
- ❖ *Philisiwe* (Healed one)
- ❖ *Lotindlela* (Traveller)

Males

- ❖ *Nkhululeko* (Freedom)
- ❖ *Siphesihle* (Beautiful gift)
- ❖ *Nkhosinatsi* (Lord is with us)

Five-syllabic personal names

Females

- ❖ *Lomalungelo* (Owner of rights)
- ❖ *Ntfombikayise* (Father's girl)
- ❖ *Ntfombiyesive* (Girl of the nation)

Males

- ❖ *Letsakuthula* (Peacemaker/peace bringer)
- ❖ *Mahemuhemu* (Hear sayings)
- ❖ *Mandlakayise* (Father's strength)

Sixth-syllables personal names

- ❖ *Ntfombiyebenguni* (Girl of the Nguni Clan)
- ❖ *Ntfombiyetimanga* (Girl of the miracles)
- ❖ *Samukelisiwe* (We are given)

Males

- ❖ *Siphosebanguni* (Gift of the Nguni clan)
- ❖ *Mfanawetimanga* (Boy of surprises)
- ❖ *Siphiwosesive* (Gift of the nation)

The personal names that are given on syllables are classified according to the number of syllables. The syllables are vital for a rhythm and rhyme. From four-syllabic personal names onwards, it is noticed that they are formed by compound words. They are a combination of various parts of speech.

Personal names reflecting love

Male

- ❖ *Lutsandvo* (Love)

Female

- ❖ *Lolusandvo* (Mother of Love)

Personal name reflecting education

Male

- ❖ *Mfundvo* (Education)
- ❖ *Ticu* (Qualifications)

Females

- ❖ *Lomfundvo* (Mother of education)
- ❖ *Loticu* (Mother of Qualifications)

Personal name reflecting politics

Males

- ❖ *Mbusave* (Politics)

Females

- ❖ *Lombusave* (Mother of politics)

Personal name reflecting health

Males

- ❖ *Mphilo* (Health)

Female

- ❖ *Lomphilo* (Mother of health)

Personal names reflecting technology

Males

- ❖ *Mathendeni/Somathendeni* (Tents)
- ❖ *Nyuvesi /Somanyuvesi* (University/universities)
- ❖ *Makhekhe/Somakhekhe* (Cakes)

Females

- ❖ *Lomathende* (Mother of tents)
- ❖ *Lomanyuvesi* (Mother of Universities)
- ❖ L*omakhekhe* (Mother of cakes)

Personal names reflecting nature

Males

- ❖ *Mvula* (Rain)
- ❖ *Langa* (Sun)
- ❖ *Lwandle* (Sea)

Females

- ❖ *Lomvula* (Mother of the rain)
- ❖ *Lomalanga* (Mother of the sun)
- ❖ *Lolwandle* (Mother of the sea)

Personal name reflecting death

Females

- ❖ *Lokufa* (Mother of death)
- ❖ *Lomhlanga* (Mother of reeds)
- ❖ *Losililo* (Mother of sorrow)

Males

- ❖ *Kufa* (Death)
- ❖ *Mhlanga* (Reed)
- ❖ *Sililo* (Sorrow)

Personal name reflecting months of the year

Females

- ❖ *Lomabasa* (Mother of April month)
- ❖ *Lolweti* (Mother of November month)
- ❖ *Lonkhwekhweti* (Mother of May month)

Males

- ❖ Mabasa (April)
- ❖ *Lweti* (November)
- ❖ *Nkhwekhweti* (May)

Personal name reflecting abstract noun

Males

- ❖ *Lutsandvo* (Love)
- ❖ *Musa* (Mercy)
- ❖ *Sihawu* (Sentiment)

Females

- ❖ *Lolutsandvo* (Mother of love)
- ❖ *Lomusa* (Mother of mercy)
- ❖ *Losihawu* (Mother of sentiment)

It is noted that various themes are covered when bestowing Siswati names as reflected above. The following themes: education, death, politics, nature, technology, and health are coved. It is also noted that the feminine prefix *Lo-* is used to denote the females, while male prefix *So-* is used to the specific personal names or words.

Personal names bestowed due to archaic tendency

This is evident in Siswati language only. Where a female child is given the name which is combination of feminine prefix La- and the biological fathers name, for example:

❖ *La + Magadlela* (daughter of *Magadlela-* (strike of)
❖ *La + Vumisa* (daughter of *Vumisa-* (make to admit)
❖ *La + Mandlamakhulu* (daughter of *Mandlamakhulu-* (great power)
❖ *La +Mfulamudze* (daughter of *Mfulamudze-* (long river)

Personal name on Siswati traditional words. The Siswati traditional personal naming practice is used where a daughter is given a name of her father with a prefix La-

❖ *La + emabutfo* (regiments) –*Mabutfo/ Lomabutfo* (Mother of the regiments)
❖ *La + emagala* (branches) –*Magala/ Lomagala* (Mother of the branches)

The personal names that are bestowed on archaic tendency are traditional naming practice reflecting the prefixing of the formative La- which stands for a daughter of. This is unique Siswati tendency that is not shared by broader Nguni classes.

IX. DISCUSSION

Names are not simply the arbitrary symbol but they are meaningful in the etymological sense, synchronic sense and have significance pragmatic meanings. The naming persons in the African culture is closely linked to the traditional and norm of its people. Among the Swati, the first and invariable have distinct lexical meaning. It is a common practice among parents to embody in the expectation they might have for the child in future (Neethling, 1994:88) in some culture it could be argued that names do not have a stable and pragmatic stance values as they are chosen and bestowed on arbitrarily. In Siswati names are linked to specific incidents within the nuclear and extended family of clan. The extension of naming process is that they show a clear relationship within the subculture. Personal name is the real, authentic and genuine name, while nickname is regarded as an informal name, that one's friends of family call one, which is not one's real name.

It is considered to be the name given to a person in addition to his or her legal name (Busse 1983:301). In some cases, names signify class and status within a meaningful social organisation (Leslie and Skipper. 1990:273). This observation among Swati people is illustrated by the following names:

Makhosonkhe (all chiefs)

Mholi (leader), *Ngwenyama* (King)

Mphatsisive (Clan governor)

Each name has its own meaning and suits a particular situation which can be in the family, society or at national levels. Names are descriptive and narrative, therefore are bestowed as a form of response to individual characteristics rather than to encourage the development of desired characteristics. In this way names symbolise identities that have emerged as opposed to assigned or ascribed identity Naming and use reflect the social importance, characteristics and salience of these emergent identities. There bears who are bestowed that names earn them identification, recognition and distinctiveness. How individuals experience names can only be understood in how they reveal situational context. Personal names depict uniqueness, selfhood and character.

A name in a Siswati society is highly regarded and acclaimed. The name given to a child is linked to some person. The basic belief is that names determine the destiny of those who carry them. The child can be named after his or her grandfather or grandmother. It is believed that the spirit of that ancestor, after whom the child is named, will possess it and that child will inherit the qualities of that ancestor. At other times, the name given to a child may be determined by the circumstances surround its birth. If the woman fails to conceives, the ancestors are consulted and a pledge may be made. If the woman then conceives, when the child is born is called Madloti or Lomadloti. A child born during famine or war will carry a name expressing that state. Loncwala is a name bestowed to a female child born during *incwala* ceremonies and a male child born during the same period is named Ncwala. A baby is kept in-doors for a month. Thereafter, the ritual for introducing it to the ancestors is

performed. A specific goat is slaughtered for the ancestors and a name is bestowed. The goat skin, *imbeleko* is given to the mother to use carrying the baby.

The word onomastics is derived from the Greek word, *onoma* which means name. Onomastics is the study of names and naming systems. In any language, names are nouns, that is, linguistics units. As names are linguistics units which normally operate within a social context, onomastics can be considered a branch of socio-linguistics. Although onomasticians (names scholars) may also be geographers, historians and scientist, generally they work in departments of linguistics or departments of a specific language studies. For the large part of the 1900s, onomastics in South Africa was mainly restricted to toponym, the study of place names. Onomastic came of the age in South Africa with the formation of the Southern African names society in 1980.

All the name changes are challenges in onomasticians: challenges to interpret and explain them and challenges to assist with further name changes. To be able to do these things, the onomastician must first understand the patterns of the nomenclature in the various languages of South Africa. The major challenge is namely: the undertaking of exploration of the anthroponys, the toponyms, the name of the birds and plants that help to reveal the complex patterns of naming that speak so eloquently of the link between language and culture. Without understanding the naming patterns of the past and of the present, plans for the name changes of the future will be too difficult.

X.   Conclusion

For the responses of the respondents with different social background, the researcher observes that name giving culture in Siswati culture can be prompted by a range of social, religious and cultural circumstances at the time of a birth's 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 Siswati names are of historical importance, as they generally refers to some event in the social history of the family clan. The naming process is a continuum that has never been disturbed since it had begun. The simple number of personal names reflect the selected themes, various syllables and miscellaneous groupings.

XI.   Recomendations

It is strongly recommended that personal names must be broadly studied as an aspect in the formal education. Their semantic and referential functions need more attention. The coverage of indigenous and exotic inclinations, as well as the grammatical structures must be considered. They are both social and cultural aspects that will need explication, exploration and analysis.

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