

A Morpho-phonemic Study of Umunze Personal Names, Southeastern Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper undertakes a morpho-phonemic study of Umunze personal names in order to ascertain their internal structures. These names are identified based on their root and word classes. The theoretical underpinning hinges on Sapir-Whorfian's Hypothesis referred to as Linguistic Relativity which states that the structure of a language determines how speakers of that language view the world. The sampled population was 50 Umunze native speakers engaged in unstructured interview sessions. The selection of the sampled population was done using 'stratified random sampling' method to avoid bias and achieve homogeneity. The sampled population comprised 30 men, 10 women and 10 youths. The rationale behind the unequal interest in the selection of the sampled population is because the men have a deeper knowledge of the constituent of Umunze names while the women and the youths are the recipients of Umunze cultural values. Consequently, 46 names were collected and presented for analysis. The findings showed that the root words of the Umunze personal names are derived by the addition of prefixes while some are derived by the combinations of two phonemes which may be either a consonant or digraph and a vowel. Names are formed by the concatenation of suffixes and each morph is distinctive but stuck together to constitute the meanings of the names. The paper concludes that Umunze personal names are given based on the options the dialect makes available to the namer in addition to abiding by the rules of the grammar of Igbo.

Key terms: Personal names, morpho-phonemic, Umunze people, naming system, linguistic relativity

Introduction

A morphophonemic study is the interface between phonological and morphological processes. Ramlan (2001, p. 83) refers morphophonemic as the "changes of phoneme as a result from the merging of one morpheme and another". It is a process of form changes in which phoneme and morpheme are involved. On the other hand, Dwi-Astuti (2011, p.179-180) describes a morphophonemic study as a the branch of "structural linguistics that studies the variations or changes in the phonemic structure of allomorphs of two or more morphemes which combine to form a new derivational as well as inflectional word forms". In other words, it examines the interactions and the relationship between the two levels of linguistics; phonology and morphology particularly evident in the concept of allomorph.

An allomorph as the name implied is a variant or a different phonological manifestation of a morpheme. For example, the plural, possessive and past time morphemes change their nature depending on the phonological environment where they occur. Therefore, the past tense morpheme is realised as (a) /id/ if the verb ends in /d/ or /t/ as in 'mended' /mendid/ and 'wanted' /wantid/, (b) /d/ if the verb ends in a voiced sound except /d/ as in 'begged' /begd/; and (c) /t/ after verbs ending in any voiceless consonant other than /t/ as in 'missed' /mist/. It can be said that the sounds when added to words change the pronunciation and new words are formed. Therefore, the /id/, /d/ and /t/ are grouped together as allomorphs of the past tense

morpheme and are said to be in complementary distribution because each morph only occurs in the context described above thus the realisation of allomorphs of the same morpheme.

This rule does not only apply to vowels but also consonants; that is the speakers' phonological and morphological knowledge will help in the formation of cluster of consonants. This speaker's knowledge of phonology will help them to know that English allows a cluster of a number of consonants in word initial and word final positions but there are constraints in the sequence of these consonants especially in initial position of a word. However, English is not the only language that has morphemes that are pronounced differently in different phonological environment but other languages have morpheme variation that can be described by rules similar to the ones mentioned above. Abah and Emodi (2016, p. 8) summed it up when they say that the "effect of phonology on morphology is an intimate relationship which can be described using the concept morphophonology or morphophonemic". For example, the allomorphic variation of affixes is frequently determined by their phonological context, and affixation often imposes phonological requirements. Both of them work *pari pasu* in the formation of words; more so, morphology is the study of word formation, but phonology helps in the study of word formation.

Furthermore, a morphophonemic study involves an attempt to give a series of formal rules that successfully predict the regular sound changes that occur in morphemes of a given language. These rules convert a theoretical underlying representation into a surface form that is actually heard. It also involves phonological interactions with the morpheme, limitations on the phonological shape of morphological entities such as words or stems as well as the phonological processes such as assimilation and the effect they have on the shapes of morphemes. Nevertheless, it is important to focus on a morphophonemic study in order to investigate the interactions and the relationship that exist between the phonological and morphological processes in the formation of names in Umunze Igbo. This is needful because many native speakers do not know what constitutes Umunze personal names that the bearers of the names choose to shorten and abbreviate these names thereby causing them to lose their meanings, hence this study. Consequently, this study classified these names based on their roots and the significance of the root words to the native speakers.

Naming System in Igbo

Igbo is one of the several Nigerian languages with distinctive peculiarity. 'Ndi Igbo' or the Ibo people as they are called, "occupy the Eastern part of Nigeria with a population fluctuating between twenty and thirty million native speakers" (Obinna in Igbokwe 2013, p. 152). They are predominantly found in Anambra, Imo, Abia, Enugu, Ebonyi, and part of Delta and Rivers. In Igbo traditional society, a naming ceremony is called 'Igu Afa'. The general rule common to all Igbos is that the naming ceremony occurs on the 8th day after a child's birth. Such a ceremony as seen by Obiego (1984) in Nwoye (2014) is the concern not only of the agnate (Umunna) but also of the whole village. It brings relatives and friends together from other villages and even from outside the village. The ceremony centres on the parents and the grandparents of the named child. The father of the named child pours wine libations in deference to our ancestors to notify them of the child's name. This is accompanied by the breaking of kola nuts and prayer is also offered on behalf of the named child. Nwoye (2014) observed that during the prayer session, the elderly participants strike their closed fist on the

ground in front of them as they chorus the fixed expression, (lsee, which means, “Indeed thus we say”) after each stanza of the prayer of blessing of the child.

Umunze is a town in Anambra State and the headquarters of Orumba South Local Government Area. Its geographic coordinates are 5° 58' 0" north, 7° 13' 0" east. Umunze dialect is one of the dialects of Igbo language. There are a lot of similarities between the Umunze dialect and Igbo Izugbe which is the Standard Igbo according to Eze (2019: 61-64) with a few differences but when people from different linguistic backgrounds converge, they communicate with Igbo Izugbe for mutual intelligibility. However, the naming system in Umunze is not totally different from that of other Igbo communities; they are in tune with the 8th day naming system of the Igbos. According to an informant, naming a child requires a lot of processes; firstly, the parents of the named child would consult an oracle to know who reincarnated as the newly born. The rationale behind the belief of the metamorphic dead relative to a newly born child is to make their life better in this new life. The reincarnation ritual is known as “Igba ahaagu” (oracle consultation). Secondly, it is accompanied with a kolanut and palm wine and a prayer offered on behalf of the newborn child.

Empirical Review

Anthroponomastic (personal names) study has attracted the interest of many scholars in Onomastics and the areas they explored include the following; Jakada (2023) analysed a work on the pragmatic study of names and naming in Hyam (Jaba). The study examines typical traditional Hyam names and their meanings among the Hyam of Kaduna State. It identifies the contextual factors that influence the naming system as well as investigates the pragmatic implications of the use of Hyam traditional names among the native speakers of Hyam. The study finds out that Hyam names do not only identify a person but also communicate so much about the circumstance surrounding the person’s birth as well as the religious belief of the child’s parents. The speech acts performed are informing, requesting, questioning or expressing gratitude which reflects the emotional link or expectations of the name giver.

Jakada (2023) gives insight to this present work in the area of identifying of personal names. This current work is dissimilar with Jakada’s (2023) work in that this present work dwells on the identifying of personal names based on their root while Jakada’s work centres on the extent to which the speakers depend on context or background knowledge to interpret the meaning of their names. This present work delves into other word formation processes which are not the focus of Jakada’s work. This current work and Jakada’s (2023) work are similar in the area of identification of personal names in both languages.

Usman (2021) undertook a sociolinguistic study of selected Nupe personal names. The study identifies the typology and the meaning of Nupe personal names. It investigates its cultural implications and its effect on the language. It adopts Greima’s Socio-semiotic theory which deals with the different signifying systems in the human society. The methodology for this study involves unstructured interview with both literate and illiterate men and women.

The findings shows that Nupe names are the building blocks of the society and can be recycled. In essence, a new born child can bear the name of an aunty or uncle in their memory because of their remarkable deeds. The study finds out that names do not occur in a vacuum; rather, they are given for a reason. The author affirms that names can be given based on the title of the parents, events/festivals at the point of delivery, days of the week, time of birth,

market days, importance of children and places of birth and in praise to God. Some names reflect conflict and helplessness, some signify good destiny; some are traditional names, circumstantial names, expression of strength, bravery and virtues while others are named based on occupation.

This paper is different from Usman's (2021) work in that this present work investigates the derivatives of selected personal names in Umuze Igbo in terms of how phonemes and verb roots are incorporated to form personal names. Usman's (2021) work gives insight to this study in the area of identifying the typology of personal names and the circumstances that affect them. This current study delves into other derivational processes of name formation in Umuze such as blending, clipping, conversion, reduplication, backformation, and acronyms which is not central to Usman's (2021) work.

Nkamigbo (2019) examines the sociolinguistics of Igbo personal names. The paper discusses the typology of Igbo names such as family names, occupational names, circumstantial names, market day names, kinship names, honorifics and title names, and metaphoric names. She reveals that names are no longer driven by traditional Igbo philosophy but by some external factors such as new religions, urbanization and Western philosophy. The paper affirms that people change their names when there is something in the family history they want to dissociate themselves from, and in order to put an end to such historical events, they cease to answer the family name. This work is relevant to this present work because it gives an insight to the typology of Igbo personal names. The gap between Nkamigbo (2019) and this work is that this present work examines the derivatives of selected personal names in Umuze in relation to how they are combined to form personal names while Nkamigbo (2019) is interested in the sociocultural relevance of personal names in Igbo. This current study identifies Igbo names based on their roots as well as other derivational processes such as blending, clipping, conversion, reduplication, acronyms and reduplication which is not the focus of Nkamigbo's (2019) work. It can be deduced from the reviews above that although names and naming has been a matter of concern to many scholars, none has been done on an internal structural analysis of selected Umuze personal names.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical underpinning for this study is the strong version of Sapir-Whorfian Linguistic Relativity theory. The strong version of the theory states that "the structure of a language determines the way in which speakers of that language view the world. Contrarily, the weaker version states that the structure does not determine the world-view" (Wardhaugh, 2013, p. 230). Nevertheless, our language cannot be divorced from our culture because culture is the way of life of the people who speak a particular language. On the other hand, our cultural values and beliefs are embedded in our language. They are what constitute the totality of who we are. It is what we perceive in our environment that determines our worldview. We cannot think of what we have not seen or perceived in our environment because we do not know what it is, what it looks like or how it looks. Therefore, our language and culture have an affinity. On the interrelationship between language and culture, Sapir (1929b, p. 207) maintained that:

Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of the

particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. It is quite an illusion to imagine that one adjusts to reality essentially without the use of language and that language is merely an incidental means of solving specific problems of communication or reflection. The fact of the matter is that the real world is to a large extent, unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group.... We see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation.

In the view of Sapir, there is an affinity between language and culture, and invariably the activities of human beings cannot be divorced from our language. The cultural activities of man range from naming, dressing, food, dancing, arts, and marriage, all issues pertaining to these activities can be solved through the use of language. That is why language and culture can be seen as one side of the coin; they are inseparable. Our language dictates our dealings in the real world. In furtherance to this claim, Whorf affirmed that the relationship between language and the culture is a deterministic one. According to Carrol (1956, p. 212-14):

the background linguistic system (in other words, the grammar) of each language is not merely a reproducing instrument for voicing ideas but rather is itself the shaper of ideas, the program and the guide for the individual's mental activity, for his analysis of impressions, for the synthesis of his mental stock in trade.... We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages.

In his view, different speakers perceive the world differently because their language differs structurally. We see and perceive our environments through our language. In Nigerian situation, we are a multilingual and multicultural society; therefore, we perceive the world differently because our languages differ.

From the foregoing, this study submits that there is an interrelationship between language and culture. Both of them work in *pari pasu* in that our language functions well in our cultural practices as well as we cannot practice our culture without the use of language. Therefore, our language determines our worldview. Similarly, naming as one of the cultural practices cannot function without the use of language. Language is employed in naming to express our challenges, experiences, feelings, emotions, and ideas. These experiences and challenges which are expressed through naming are derived from things and objects we hold at high esteem. Contrary to this equates to a meaningless structure and can amount to sociolinguistic tragedy, thus, the use of the stronger version of the theory in analysing this study.

Methodology

The study employs a descriptive qualitative research design as it aims to systematically describe the population especially as much is not known about how Umunze names are derived. The target population for this study comprises the whole of Umunze native speakers, and the sampled population was fifty (50) literate and illiterate men and women, young and old respondents were employed as the research subjects. In essence, the sampled population constitutes thirty (30) men, ten (10) women and ten (10) youths. The unequal interest in the

selection of the sampled population is that the men have a deeper knowledge of the names because they are the custodians of the culture and also naming is the prerogative of the head of the family while the women and the young respondents are the recipients. In addition, the men were used to verify the data collected from the women and young ones. However, a stratified random sampling was employed in that the population was divided into subgroups; a random sample was taken from each subgroup to avoid bias and to achieve homogeneity. The research instruments for this study include unstructured interviews and participant observation. Both instruments are used because they involve contact with the native speakers and they would give the researcher first-hand information about these names. The same questions were asked to both illiterate and literate respondents for uniformity.

Data Presentation and Analysis

These names are presented in tables for clarification; a choice made by the researcher based on their root. Then, the morpho-phonemic components of the root words, the names and their meanings were identified and analysed. This is needful because the names are linked to people's worldviews and aspirations. In addition, they are carriers of the socio-cultural values, norms, and beliefs of the people.

Personal Names Derived from the Noun, 'uzo' (way/road/path)

There are personal names derived through a noun 'uzo' (way/road/path) which consists of a half-close lip-rounding vowel sound /u/ + a VR 'zo' (hide) to realize 'uzo' (way/road/path). Consequently, a voiced alveolar fricative consonant sound /z/ as well as the open lip rounding vowel sound /o/ constitutes the verb root. The names derived are as follows:

Table 1: Personal Names Derived from the Noun, 'uzo' (way/road/path)

S/ N	Personal Names	Gloss	Root Words	Suffix	Suffix	Suff ix	Suf fix
1	Uzoma	Good road/way.	Uzo-	-ma			
2	Uzochukwu	The way of God.	Uzo-	-chu-	-kwu		
3	Uzomaka	A beautiful way/road.	Uzo-	-a-	-ma-	-ka	
4	Uzonna	Way of the father.	Uzo-	-n-	-na		
5	Uzodimma	Way that is beautiful.	Uzo-	-di-	-m-	-ma	
6	Uzeghe	Let the door open.	Uzo-	-e-	-ghe		
7	Uzegzie	Right road.	Uzo-	-e-	-zi-	-e-	
8	Uzewuzie	Way that is well built.	Uzo-	-e-	-wu-	-zi-	-e

The forms of the names are; ‘Uzoma’ (good way) in datum 1 is comprised the root word ‘Uzo’ (way) + the VR ‘ma’ (slap) while ‘Uzochukwu’ (way of God) in datum 2 consists of the base ‘Uzo’ (way) + the VR ‘chu’ (fetch) and the VR ‘kwu’ (talk). In addition, the name ‘Uzomaka’ (a beautiful way) in datum 3 is made up of the base ‘Uzo’ (way) + an open lip-spreading vowel sound /a/ + a VR ‘ma’ (slap) and a VR ‘ka’ (greater), while ‘Uzonna’ (way of the father) in datum 4 consists of the root word ‘Uzo’ + a voiced alveolar nasal sound /n/ and a VR ‘na’ (is). However, the successions of the phonemes and verb roots are as follows; ‘U/zə/ma’ (good way) in datum 1 has a phoneme and two verb roots, ‘U/zə/di/m/ma’ (way that is beautiful) in datum 5 has two phonemes and three verb roots while ‘U/zə/e/ghe’ (way that is open) in datum 6 has two phonemes and two verb roots. The root word, ‘Uzo’ (way/road/path/access) is crucial to the people of Umunze in the bustle and hustle of everyday endeavours. In every movement, a road or a way or path is an important form of infrastructure that can take a person from one point to another. Therefore, having names that have to do with road/way is not out of the way as Eze (2020, p. 70) puts it, “a road is an accessible road to any destination and it acts as a unifying factor for every member of the community”, thus the need for all these names.

Personal Names Derived from the Noun, ‘Chi’ (God)

The base ‘Chi’ (God) is made up of a voiceless palato-alveolar consonant sound /ch/ joined with a phoneme close lip-spreading vowel sound /i/ to realize ‘Chi’ (God). In these derivatives two phonemes are employed, a diagraph /ch/ and a vowel sound /i/ unlike the one in table 1 which is a prefix and a verb root are used in forming the root word.

Table 2: Personal Names Derived from the Noun, ‘Chi’ (God)

S/N	Personal Names	Gloss	Suffix	Suffix	Suffix	Suffix	Suffix	Suffix	Suffix
9	Chidumimi	God is mysterious.	Chi-	-dū-	-o-	-mi-	-mi		
10	Chidiebere	God is merciful.	Chi-	-di-	-e-	-be-	-re		
11	Chikodili	Leave it for God.	Chi-	-ko-	-di-	-li			
12	Chibuzo	God leads.	Chi-	-bu-	-zo				
13	Chimaramma	God is beautiful.	Chi-	-ma-	=ra-	-m-	-ma		
14	Chinwendu	God owns life.	Chi-	-nwe-	-n-	-du			
15	Chinenye	God is the giver.	Chi-	-ne-	-nye				
16	Chibueze	God is king	Chi-	-bu-	-e-	-ze			
17	Chinasaramokwu	God who answers for me.	Chi-	-na-	=sa-	-ra-	-m-	-o-	-kwu
18	Chinazaekpere	God who answers prayer.	Chi-	-na-	-za-	-e-	-kpe-	-re	

19	Chisimdi	God says I will live.	Chi-	-si-	-m-	-di			
20	Chizoba	God defends.	Chi-	-zo-	Ba				
21	Chinonyerem	God be with me.	Chi-	-no-	-nye-	-re-	-m		
22	Chinyere	God gives.	Chi-	-nye-	-re				
23	Chibuonyim	God is my friend.	Chi-	-bu-	-o-	-nyi-	-m		
24	Chigozie	God blesses.	Chi-	-go-	-zi-	-e			
25	Chibuikem	God is my strength.	Chi-	-bu-	-i-	-ke-	-m		

The structures of the personal names are; ‘Chidumimi’ (God is mysterious) in datum 9 is made up of the root word ‘Chi’ (God) + a verb root ‘du’ (advice) + an open lip-rounding vowel /o/ + a verb root ‘mi’ (dry) and a verb root ‘mi’ (dry), similarly, ‘Chidiebere’ (God is merciful) in datum 10 consists of the base ‘Chi’ (God) + a verb root ‘di’ (is) + a half-open lip-spreading vowel sound /e/ + a verb root ‘be’ (home) and a verb root ‘re’ (sell). The name ‘Chikodili’ (leave it for God) in datum 11 constitutes the base ‘Chi’ (God) + a verb root ‘ko’ (tell) + ‘di’ (is) (VR) and the verb root ‘li’ (past marker). ‘Chinasaramokwu’ (God who answers for me) in datum 17 consists of the base ‘Chi’ + a verb root ‘na’ (is) + a verb root ‘sa’ (answer) + a verb root ‘ra’ (past marker) + a bilabial nasal consonant sound /m/ + a half-open lip-rounding vowel sound /o/ and a verb root ‘kwu’ (talk).

The compositions of the phonemes and the verb roots in the personal names are as follows; ‘Chi/bu/zo’ (God leads) in datum 12 has three verb roots with no phoneme at all while ‘Chi/ma/ra/m/ma’ (God is beautiful) in datum 13 has a phoneme and four verb roots. Consequently, ‘Chi/nwe/n/du’ (God owns life) in datum 14 has a phoneme and three verb roots while ‘Chi/ne/nye’ (God is the giver) in datum 15 has only three verb roots. The voiced nasal syllabic sounds /n/ and /m/ appear as phonemes in the names above, but only the voiced bilabial nasal sound /m/ occurs at the beginning ‘Chibuikem’ (God is my strength), medial ‘Chi/ma/ra/m/ma’ (God is beautiful), and final positions “Mmasichukwu’ (will of God) while the voiced alveolar nasal sound /n/ occurs at the final ‘Nnanna’ (father, father) and medial positions ‘Chi/nwe/n/du’ (God owns life). Both phonemes cooperate with the verb root in the formation of Umunze names.

The root word ‘Chi’ (God) is referred to as a supernatural being whom Pearle (1956:9) maintained that “He is the source of all energy in the universe”. Njoku (2010) in Kanu (2014, p. 148) argues that “everything in Igbo whether animate or inanimate has a ‘Chi’, however, it does not translate that everything can be ‘Chi’”. Nevertheless, incorporating the base ‘Chi’ (God) to name a child is a beauty to behold in praise and honour of whom that has brought the newly born into the world. That is why a name in Africa is considered “a beauty to behold as it contains a very rich pool of religious, social, cultural and historical factors which serve as a means of data for linguists, philosophers, psychologists and anthropologists” (Tyumbu, 2017, p. 144). Therefore, the root word ‘Chi’ (God) structurally bound with other phonemes and verb roots grammatically constitutes the personal names.

Personal Names Derived from the Noun, ‘nche’ (guard)

The root word ‘nche’ (guard) is a noun agent which consists of an voiced alveolar nasal sound /n/ + a verb root ‘che’ (think/guard) to derive ‘nche’ (guard). The combination of the verb root is a voiceless palato-alveolar consonant sound /ch/ + a half open lip-spreading vowel sound /e/.

Table 3: Personal Names Derived from the Noun, ‘nche’ (guard)

S/ N	Personal Names	Gloss	Root Words	Suff ix	Suff ix	Suff ix	Suffi x
26	Ncheteka	To remember is greater.	Nche-	-te-	-ka		
27	Nchedochukwu	Guardian of God.	Nche-	-do-	-chu-	-kwu	
28	Nchekwubechukwu	To hope on God.	Nche-	-kwu -	-be-	-chu-	-kwu

The compositions of the names are as follows; ‘Ncheteka’ (to remember is greater) in datum 26 consists of the base ‘nche’ (guard) + a verb root ‘te’ (rub/cook) + a verb root ‘ka’ (greater) while ‘Nchedochukwu’ (guardianship of God) in datum 27 is made up of the root word ‘nche’ (guard) + the verb root ‘do’ (keep) + a verb root ‘chu’ (fetch) and a verb root ‘kwu’ (talk). Similarly, the name ‘Nchekwubechukwu’ (to hope on God) in datum 28 comprises the base ‘nche’ (guard) + a verb root ‘kwu’ (talk) + a verb root ‘be’ (home) + a verb root ‘chu’ (fetch) and a verb root ‘kwu’ (talk). The components of the phonemes and the verb roots of the personal names are as follows; ‘N/che/te/ka’ (to remember is greater) in datum 26, ‘N/che/do/chu/kwu’ (guardiance of God) in datum 27, and ‘N/che/kwu/be/chu/kwu’ (to hope on God) in datum 58 have a phoneme each and three, four, and five verb roots sequentially arranged respectively. The root word ‘nche’ (guard) is a noun agent and when reference is made to it as ‘ndu nche’, by Umunze people, it means ‘people who guard’ the villagers. These people are important to the villagers as they restrain the evil activities of the hoodlums. They form a vigilante group that guards the people from the dastardly act of hoodlums. Because of how the people perceive the root word ‘nche’ (guard), they are compelled to incorporate it in naming a child. According to Burling (1970:1) whether we are casual in observing the world around us or taxonomic biologists, we feel compelled to give names to the objects we examine. It is this observance of the world by the Umunze people in their sociolinguistic backgrounds that compelled them to bear these names which may or may not constitute names in other places. The truth is that as Deluzaini (1996) in Amos (2015, p. 158) puts it, “names are a part of every culture and are of enormous importance both to the people who receive names and to the society that gives them”. That is why names and naming are universal and culture specific.

Personal Names Derived from the Noun, ‘Nna’ (father)

The root word ‘nna’ (father) comprises a voiced alveolar nasal sound /n/ + a verb root ‘na’ (is) to derive ‘nna’ (father). What constitute the verb root are a voiced alveolar nasal sound /n/ + an open lip-spreading vowel sound /a/. The derived names from ‘nna’ (father) are seen below;

Table 4: Personal Names Derived from the Noun, ‘Nna’ (father)

S/ N	Personal Names	Gloss	Root Words	Suffix	Suffix	Suffix	Suffix
29	Nnaemeka	Father has done well.	Nna-	-e-	-me-	-ka	
30	Nnaemerie	Father is victorious.	Nna-	-e-	-me-	-ri-	-e
31	Nnanyereugo	God has given honour.	Nna-	-nye-	-re-	-u-	-go
32	Nnamdi	My father is alive.	Nna-	-m-	-di		
33	Nnabuenyi	Father is great.	Nna-	-bu-	-e-	-nyi	
34	Nnabuiife	Father is something.	Nna-	-bu-	-i-	-fe	
35	Nnanna	Father’s father.	Nna-	-n-	-na		

The components of the personal names are; ‘Nnaemeka’ (father has done well) in datum 29 is made up of the root word ‘nna’ (father) + a half-open lip-spreading vowel sound /e/ + a verb root ‘me’ (do) + a verb root ‘ka’ (greater) while ‘Nnaemerie’ (father is victorious) in datum 30 consists of the base ‘nna’ (root) + a half-open lip-spreading vowel sound /e/ + a verb root ‘me’ (do) + a verb root ‘ri’ (eat) and a half-open lip-spreading vowel sound /e/. Correspondingly, the name ‘Nnanyereugo’ (father has given honour) in datum 31 comprises the base ‘nna’ (father) + the verb root ‘nye’ (give) + the verb root ‘re’ (sell/decay) + a half-close lip-rounding vowel sound /u/ and the verb root ‘go’ (buy) and ‘Nnamdi’ (my father is alive) in datum 32 is made up of the root word ‘nna’ (father) + a bilabial nasal consonant sound /m/ and a verb root ‘di’ (available). The combinations of the phonemes and the verb roots in these names are; ‘N/na/bu/e/nyi’ (father is great) in datum 33 and ‘N/na/bu/i/fe’ (father is something) in datum 64 have two phonemes and three verb roots while ‘N/na/n/na’ (father father) in datum 35 has two phonemes and two verb roots. In Umunze sociolinguistic background, ‘Nna’ (father) as a root word is the head of the family. He represents and speaks on behalf of the family in public forums. He cultivates, grows and develops the family wealth and resources. From this, it can be deduced that names and naming practices reflect the socio-cultural identity of an individual in a community. According to Lu (2017) and Ngubane (2013) in Shanmuganath et al. (2023, p. 4), “names and naming practices are constructs of identity that reflect not only the collective self-representation of a community but also the cultural conceptualizations associated with a

community's worldviews, socio-cultural background and belief systems". Personal names, although personal are pointers to the bearers' origin.

Personal Names Derived from the Noun, 'Obi' (heart)

The base 'Obi' (heart) is made up of an half-open lip-rounding vowel sound /o/ + a verb root 'bi' (live) to realise 'obi' (heart). Similarly, the verb root is a combination of a voiced bilabial plosive consonant sound /b/ + a close lip-spreading vowel sound /i/. The personal names derived from the root word 'obi' (heart) are as follows;

Table 5: Personal Names Derived from the Noun, 'Obi' (heart)

S/ N	Personal Names	Gloss	Root Words	Suffix	Suffix	Suffix	Suffix
36	Obinna	Father's heart.	Obi-	-n-	-na		
37	Obioma	Good heart.	Obi-	-o-	-ma		
38	Obinwanne	Brother or sister's heart.	Obi-	-n-	-wa-	-n-	-ne
39	Obinalinhe	Heart that endures something.	Obi-	-na-	-li-	-n-	-he

The forms of the personal names are as follows; 'Obinna' (father's heart) in datum 36 consists of 'Obi' (heart) as the base + a voiced alveolar nasal consonant sound /n/ and a verb root 'na' (is) while 'Obioma' (good heart) in datum 37 comprises the root word 'Obi' (heart) + an open lip-rounding vowel sound /o/ and a verb root 'ma' (slap). Then, the name 'Obinwanne' (brother or sister's heart) in datum 38 is made up of the base 'Obi' (heart) + a voiced alveolar nasal consonant sound /n/ + a verb root 'wa' (cut) + an alveolar nasal consonant sound /n/ and a verb root 'ne' (look) while 'Obinalinhe' (heart that endures something) in datum 39 consists of the root word 'obi' (heart) + the verb root 'na' (is) + the verb root 'li' (endure) + a voiced alveolar nasal consonant sound /n/ and a verb root 'he' (fly).

The secessions in which the phonemes and the verb roots occur are in this order; 'O/bi/n/na' (father's heart) in datum 36, and 'O/bi/o/ma' (good heart) in datum 37 have two phonemes and two verb roots. 'O/bi/n/wa/n/ne' (brother or sister's heart) in datum 38, has three phonemes and three verb roots while 'O/bi/na/li/n/he' (heart that endures) in datum 39 is made up of two phonemes and four verb roots. The root word 'Obi' (heart) is the life-wire of the body just like the engine of a car. It pumps blood to all parts of the body but its activity is universal to all mankind. Regardless of its universality, the Umunze people perceive it with utmost importance thus bearing a name that comprises the base 'Obi' (heart) which other people may or may not perceive, that is why naming and naming practice varies across the globe. Therefore, Hanks, Hardcastle & Hodges (2006, p. xi) are correct in their observation that personal names are a "badge of cultural identity which is closely linked to religious identity and language", both of which are often key factors in choosing a name for a child.

Personal Names Derived from the Verb, ‘chu’ (fetch)

Just like the root word ‘chi’ (God) is derived from two phonemes, the base ‘chu’ (fetch) is a verb which comprises a voiceless palato-alveolar consonant sound /ch/ + a close lip-rounding vowel sound /u/ to realize ‘chu’ (fetch). The personal names derived from the root word ‘chu’ (fetch) are as follows:

Table 6: Personal Names Derived from the Verb, chu’ (fetch)

S/ N	Personal Names	Gloss	Root Words	Suffix	Suffix	Suffix	Suffix	Suffix
40	Chukwuemeka	God has done well.	Chu-	-kwu-	-e-	-me-	-ka	
41	Chukwukadi bi a	God is greater than doctor.	Chu-	-kwu-	-ka-	-di-	-bi-	-a
42	Chukwuebuka	God is the biggest.	Chu-	-kwu-	-e-	-bu-	-ka	
43	Chukwudal u	God thank you.	Chu-	-kwu-	-da-	-lu		
44	Chukwun o ns o	God is nearer.	Chu-	-kwu-	-no-	-ns o		
45	Chukwudi	God lives.	Chu-	-kwu-	-di			
46	Chukwuma	God knows.	Chu-	-kwu-	-ma			

The compositions of the personal names above include: ‘Chukwuemeka’ (God has done well) in datum 40 has its root word as ‘chu’ (fetch) + a verb root ‘kwu’ (talk) + a half open-lip spreading vowel sound /e/ + a verb root ‘me’ (do) and a verb root ‘ka’ (greater). Similarly, ‘Chukwukadi**bi**a’ (God is greater than doctor) in datum 41 consists of ‘chu’ (fetch) as the root word + the verb root ‘kwu’ (talk) + the verb root ‘ka’ (greater) + ‘di’ (is) (VR) + the verb root ‘bi’ (live) and an open lip-spreading vowel sound /a/ while ‘Chukwuebuka’ (God is the biggest) in datum 42 comprises the base ‘chu’ (fetch) + the verb root ‘kwu’ (talk) + an half-open lip-spreading vowel sound /e/ + the verb root ‘bu’ (is) and a verb root ‘ka’ (greater).

Nevertheless, how the phonemes and the verb roots are combined to constitute the personal names are as follows: the two names ‘Chu/kwu/da/lu’ (God thank you) in datum 43 and ‘Chu/kwu/no/ns**o**’ (God is nearer) in datum 44 do not have phonemes at all but only four verb roots in accordance with the rules governing the construction of words in Igbo, Umunze in particular. Therefore, anything short of this results in meaningless names. Consequently, these names ‘Chu/kwu/di’ (God lives) in datum 45 and ‘Chu/kwu/ma’ (God knows) in datum 46 are the same with the former in that they do not have phonemes at all but only three verb roots.

However, the root word ‘chu’ (fetch) is an important activity in Igbo socio-cultural milieu which involves fetching water. It can be deduced that language and culture interact to produce these personal names.

Discussion

Based on the analysis, the tables are arranged as follows; personal names derived via suffixes through their root word are ‘uzo’ (road/way) Table 1, ‘Chi’ (God) Table 2, ‘nche’ (guard) Table 3, ‘nna’ (father) Table 4, ‘obi’ (heart) Table 5, and ‘chu’ (fetch) Table 6. Some of the root words change from one lexical class to another such as in table 1, the verb root ‘zo’ (hide) changes to a noun when a half close lip-rounding vowel sound /u/ is added to realise ‘uzo’ (road/way) (noun). Consequently, the verb root ‘che’ (think) (v) in Table 3 changes to a noun when a voiced alveolar nasal sound /n/ is prefixed to the base to derive ‘nche’ (guard) (noun). Some of the root words are combinations of two phonemes such as in Table 2, the root word ‘Chi’ (God) comprises the voiceless palato alveolar sound /ch/ + a close lip-spreading vowel sound /i/ to derive ‘Chi’ (God). The personal names are made up of the phonemes and the verb roots, for example in datum 35 and 37, these names ‘N/na/n/na’ (father father) and ‘O/bi/o//ma’ (good heart) alternate phonemes and verb roots. It implies that phonemes and morphs are stuck together to form personal names.

It is not only that the verb roots are arranged in consecutive or alternate forms; also, each morph has its specific function yet operates in conjunction with others. Singh (2005, p. 28) discussing on the function of each morph, says that “each morph has a particular function, but generally remains consistent in form, and although operating in conjunction with others, retains its transparency”. Osuagwu et al. (1998, p. 64) state that Igbo as one of the agglutinating languages has “morphemes in one word express distinct categories”. However, these distinct categories can be found in these names, for example in datum 25; ‘Chi’, ‘bu’ – is, ‘i’ – affix, ‘ke’ – share, and ‘m’ – mine.

From this analysis above, it can be deduced from the submission of Aronoff and Fudeman (2005, p. 71) that agglutinating languages have “affixes although they are strung out quite separately with each expressing a single notion and are easily identified”. Each of the affixes in the personal names above is identified and strung together to help in the meaning of the name. Nevertheless, what the affixes stand for individually may be somehow different from what the total meaning of the names is eventually. The phonemes are mostly derived from vowel sounds such as /a, e, o, u, i, ɪ, ɔ, ʊ/ as well as nasal syllabic consonant sounds /m, n/, conversely, consonants sounds such as /p, t, b, d, f, g, j, k/ are not employed. These vowels and nasal syllabic sounds are employed as prefixes in forming the root words such as in datum 35, the voiced alveolar nasal consonant sound /n/ is used in deriving the root word ‘nna’ (father), and in Table 4, a half-close lip-rounding vowel sound /u/ is employed in ‘Uzo’ (road/way). It is not only as prefixes can all these vowel and nasal consonant sounds be employed in deriving the names but also, they can occur at the medial as well as at the final positions in the formation of the names. For example, in Table 2, datum 25, ‘Chibuikem’ (the Lord is my strength) can be analysed thus: ‘Chi’ – God’, ‘bu’ – is, ‘i’ – affix, ‘ke’ – share and ‘m’ – mine.

The voiced bilabial nasal consonant sound /m/ occurs at the final position while the close lip-spreading vowel sound /i/ appears at the middle. However, it is the combinations of these derivational morphemes that constitute personal names. In the internal constituents of the

names above, verb roots flourish more than the use of a phoneme, nevertheless, both are recognized in the formation of the names. There are names that have only verb roots without a phoneme, for example in datum 15, ‘Chi/ne/nye’ (God is the giver) has three verb roots. It then shows that only verb roots can be used to form personal names but phonemes cannot be used alone.

Conclusion

This study examines a morpho-phonemic study of selected personal names in Umunze Igbo in order to ascertain their internal structure. Names are marks of identities by which individuals are addressed. It is necessary to add that they do not only reveal cultural and ethnic identities but also the personality of an individual. You are your name and your name is you. Names are structured according to the language habits of a particular people. These language habits are embedded in the peoples’ worldviews, traditional beliefs, socio-cultural norms, and values. In other words, what is peculiar and perceived by a particular language may be valueless to another group. Nevertheless, within a particular community, there are varieties of dialects in which Umunze dialect is one of them. However, Umunze, as one of the dialects of Igbo belongs to agglutinating languages. It has distinctive morphs stuck together to form personal names. The morphs have a particular function but remain consistent in forms yet work together with one another.

The personal names are mostly derivational and are the concatenation of suffixes. Prefixes are added before the verb root to derive some of the root words. The prefixes employed in deriving these root words are vowels and nasal syllabic sounds. Some root words are formed by joining two phonemes and the phonemes comprise a consonant or digraph and a vowel. Generally, verb roots flourish more than phonemes in a particular name such that they can occur three, four, and five times in succession differently. However, the choices of lexemes in the formation of Umunze personal are based on their worldviews, belief systems, and objects related to their socio-cultural milieu. That is why the people employ such concepts as ‘obi’ (heart), ‘nche’ (guard), and ‘’nna’ (father) in naming their children and not snow or winter because the people do not perceive such in the region. These choices of lexemes are based on the options the dialect make available to the name giver. In conclusion, name and naming are culture-specific.

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