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The socio-cultural and linguistic implications of Zulu names

Sihawukele Ngubane

School of Arts, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Mazisi Kunene Road, Durban 4041
e-mail: ngubanes@ukzn.ac.za

Names and naming practices reflect the socio-cultural background of any particular society. Names are terms that can refer to any concept or object and naming practices concern the ‘how’ of naming. This article looks into the socio-cultural and linguistic implications of isiZulu names amongst the Zulu people. Socio-cultural implications are the large scale forces within cultures and societies that affect the thoughts and behaviours of individuals in naming practices. These factors are mainly influenced by ethnic values, identity, and family and kinship structures of that particular individual. In this regard, the concept of a name will be interrogated to showcase complexity of meanings in the African context. It will explain and define the term ‘onomastics’ as the science of naming in relation to the African society and naming practices. The article also defines the concept ‘implication’, and examines the cultural and linguistic (inter alia morphological) formations in naming practices and their significance in naming. The arguments about Zulu naming practices which the article raises emanate from a study carried out on naming practices in KwaZulu-Natal in 2000. The significance of the year 2000 is that it was the beginning of the 21st century and hence a strategic time in history to investigate changes in naming practices.

Introduction

Ordinary uses of ‘implication’ are varied, and often equivocal. Implication may be understood as a relation between a set of premises and as deducible from a logical consequence of those premises. It may thus be seen as the relation between the antecedent and consequent conditional proposition. It is something that is deduced; it suggests the consequences of an action or a statement. It forms a close connection between an act and a result or outcome.

There are many kinds of implication. One may use the ‘if … then …’ construction to indicate definitional, causal, or logical relations. Even among the logical relations that could fall under the name of implication, not all are equivalent. Material implication is one of many sorts of implication, and does not conform exactly to the English ‘if … then …’ or to ‘implies’. The American Heritage Dictionary of the English language (2000) defines the word ‘implication’ as the act of implication or the condition of being implicated or an indirect indication, suggestion or implicit significance. There is no specific version of implication but in the context of this article it is suggested that implications refer to the truth-values of the structure of names, coupled with the social context, that is, the connection between names and society. The article argues that names and naming practices have transformed since 1994. Koopman (2002) widely discusses isiZulu naming prior to the democratisation of South Africa when the indigenous name was avoided by isiZulu speakers in formal settings in favour of a name of European origin. Koopman (2002) explains that the name of European origin is derived from another culture, usually from the colonial language dominant in the area.

This article is based on data which were collected during a research study conducted in 2000 in Durban townships such as uMlazi, KwaMashu and central Durban. The transition from the colonial to the post-colonial period has witnessed a new trend in naming. The social and economic aspects have changed during the post-colonial period and this has resulted in the quest for relevant names and innovative naming practices.

The paper will argue that culture, economy and social factors are crucial in transforming name giving practices of Zulu children.

The concept of a name

Among African people, the concept of a name is complex. The name is very close to the person to whom it is given. Because of this close connection between the name and the person, names are also used widely in witchcraft. Any person may be bewitched by someone with evil intentions merely calling out their name without any physical contact. In his discussion of the anthroponymic systems of sub-Saharan Africa, Mbili (1969:118) insists that the name is inseparable from the name-bearer. From the European perspective, by contrast, names are usually the labels which merely denote the name-bearer. Koopman (2002:17) states:

The name is that person. They are the same, the name and the person. It is the word whereby that person is known. That is the name. So the person and the name are one. Umthakathi [witch] kills a man by combining the words of death with the name. He throws [ukuphonsa] these at the man and they kill him.
Anthroponomastics is the study of personal names, one of the principal branches of onomastics. Names, belonging to naming, and onomatologia, from proper names, especially personal names.

Toponymy or toponomastics, the study of place names, is one of the principal branches of onomastics; and there are quite a few definitions of the term. The New Encyclopaedia Britannica (1993:733) provides the following definition:

The science that studies names in all their aspects is called onomastics (or onomatology – an obsolete word). The subject of this science is broad because almost everything can have a name and because the study of names theoretically encompasses all languages, all geographical and cultural regions, and all historical epochs.

The Oxford dictionaries online (2013) offers a short and simple definition: ‘The study of the history and origin of proper names, especially personal names’.

According to the American Heritage Dictionary of the English language (2000), onomastics or onomatology is the study of proper names of all kinds and the origins of names: ‘The words are from Greek, onomastikos, ‘of or belonging to naming’, and onomatologia, from onoma ‘name’. Toponymy or toponomastics, the study of place names, is one of the principal branches of onomastics. Anthroponomastics is the study of personal names’.

Raper (1987:78) defines onomastics as follows:

Onomastics has as its object the study of proper names. A proper name, like any other linguistic sign, consists of a sound sequence, which may be represented graphically, and a ‘sense’ or ‘meaning’. It also has the function of referring to, or designating, an extra-linguistic entity.

In essence, all the above definitions consider onomastics as a scientific study of the names of people, places and objects.

African society and naming

Given names disclose a great deal of information about an individual and his/her family. Therefore, the naming of a child is a reflection of the society to which he or she belongs. Mphande (2006:104) explains what is vested in a name as follows: ‘A name may indicate the linguistic structures and phonological processes found in the language, the position of the name’s bearer in society, and the collective history and life experiences of the people surrounding the individual’.

An act of naming is not only the concern of the immediate family. The extended family and the community also play their part – naming is a communal exercise. Nevertheless, even though a person outside of the family (for example, a nurse, priest or teacher) may engage in the naming of a child in a given situation or influence the giving of the name, the ultimate responsibility of naming lies with the parents.

A sense of community and humane living are highly cherished values in traditional African life. Shorter (1975) affirms this by commenting that, for traditional Africans, the community is basically sacred, rather than secular, and surrounded by several religious forms and symbols. Plural forms of address are used to denote inclusivity or respect towards an individual. A visitor to Africa is struck by the frequent use of the first and second person plural in everyday speech. For example, one person may greet a single person in the plural, thus:

(1a) Sanibona! ‘Hello’ – instead of Sawubona, which refers to a greeting extended by one individual to another single person.

(1b) Sibona nina. ‘Hello’ (lit. ‘we see you (pl)’) – instead of Ngibona wena ‘Hello’ (lit. ‘I see you (sg)’).

(1c) Ninjani? ‘How are you (pl)?’ – instead of Unjani? ‘How are you (sg)?’, which refers to a single individual.

(1d) Siyaphila. ‘We are well’ – instead of Ngiyaphila ‘I am well’, which refers to a single individual.

The object concord -ni- and the subject concord si- are used to denote plural (second and first person, respectively). The cultural justification for the structure of the word is that when one sees an individual, he or she represents the family – including those who have passed on.

The environment in which a child is born greatly influences the name of that child. African society is both urban and rural nowadays and yet the majority of people who live in the cities still have their roots in their rural homes. In modern African cities, primary community loyalties to one’s extended family and village continue to exert their hold over people who live far away from their home villages. They generally return home from time to time to join members of their village communities to celebrate important traditional rituals and cultural events. Primary communities based on clan or ethnic descent, or church affiliation, abound in modern African cities. Mbiti (1991) underscores the important belief and sense
of community among traditional Africans. In traditional Africa, the individual did not, and cannot, exist alone. He owes his existence to other people – his contemporaries and also those of past generations. Whatever happens to the individual is believed to happen to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual, who can only say, ‘I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am’. This is a cardinal point in any understanding of the African view of humankind, and this African view is essential in influencing names and naming practices.

In discussing social and linguistic implications of Zulu names, this article answers questions such as: How do culture and belief systems influence names and naming practices amongst the Zulu people? What role is played by the society in the naming practices? How is a name formed or constructed?

**Cultural implications of personal names**

African personal names are widely observed to be meaningful, socially and culturally (Nsimbi, 1950; Beattie, 1957; Middleton, 1961; Tonkin, 1980; Alford, 1988 and Suzman, 1994). Sources of information about naming practices may be traced to the early writings by linguists, missionaries, administrators, and ethnographers who worked in Africa. Zulu naming practices are foregrounded against broad African naming practices and those of the Nguni group in particular; when it comes to traditional naming practices many common threads can be traced, although the various African societies do not adhere to identical principles. Stewart (1996:31) studied the Baganda of southern Uganda, the Basotho from southern Africa, Hausa from Nigeria, and Kikuyu from Kenya, and found that naming invokes the qualities of the individual whose name is used, or the qualities arising out of a particular situation or event.

Naming practices are not static but change over time and through the cultural experience of people in any society. A change in the social, political and linguistic influences on a society may result in changes in the names given to children. In most cases in the Nguni culture, personal names generally function as a signal to others, or to the family, about issues that cannot be openly discussed and resolved. For instance, the Nguni tradition avoids open discussion of sensitive issues like illegitimate pregnancy or adultery, and in order to avoid confrontation, the parents or the family will name a child to express their concern in an indirect way. Other sources of names may be linked to something that surrounds or affects the parents: prosperity within the family, family history or historical events in general, sex of the child, family structure, day on which a child is born, child’s physical features, family clan, continuity within the family, spirituality, inspiration, burial rites, and the feelings of the parents towards a newly-born child.

Traditionally, it was a rule that both father and mother give their child a name (Bryant, 1949). According to Bryant, the father had the first right, so the mother held back her name until later, and this resulted in two names which were distinguished as igama likayihlo (your father’s name) and igama likanyoko (your mother’s name). In most cases, a boy’s name given by the father would supersede the one given by the mother, and the mother’s would prevail in the case of girls. Thus, if the child is a girl, the mother will name the child, but if the father wants to name the girl as well he will be allowed to do so. Similarly, if the child is a boy the father will be the first to give the name, and this is a sign that he accepts his paternity of the child.

The selected names may be the names of members of the family who are still alive, but also of those who have died. However, only the ancestors of the father’s family are considered, because when a woman marries, her own ancestors are ‘killed’ and she transfers her allegiance to the ancestors of her husband’s family. This transfer is done ceremonially through the slaughtering of a beast to symbolise the death of the woman’s original ancestors and the acceptance by the woman of the ancestors of the new clan she has joined through her marriage. The wife’s ancestors are not praised or acknowledged in the new home.

In the Nguni culture, the name of a person is ancestor-linked and therefore cannot be changed by legal process alone but, once it has been bestowed on a child, only through communication with the ancestors. A mere legal change would be seen as a rejection of the ancestors, and traditionally the practice was forbidden, as it still is today. After death, one will be called upon by one’s descendants by means of one’s given name. When Nguni people communicate with the dead, they use the names of those members of the family who have died as intermediaries. The Nguni people’s belief that children come from God through the ancestors is confirmed by Thipa (1987:107). Bryant (1949:429) noted that the Nguni children came from God via the ancestors, and named as an ‘ancestor’ any male predecessor in the clan older than a great-grandfather (the founder of the clan). This is a belief held by most African people.

The founder of the clan is known as ukhokho (‘great-grandfather’). The Nguni believe that the creator of all people is uMvelinqangi (‘God, the one who came first, the founder of the earth’). A clan is always the offspring of a single man, whose name the clan adopts. The founder of the clan is therefore the great-grandparent of that particular clan, as illustrated by examples from Ngubane (2000:63):

(2a) Mkhize is the founder of the Mkhize clan.
(2b) Ngubane is the founder of the Ngubane clan.
(2c) Zondi is the founder of the Zondi clan.
(2d) Ngcobo is the founder of the Ngcobo clan.

Names such as Mkhize, Ngubane, Zondi and Ngcobo are personal names of the founders which later became surnames; all people sharing their surnames are linked to their founders and as a result they are related. Their sons’ names usually become the clan praise of that surname such as Mbovu, who was the son of Ngubane.

Since all communities consist of individuals and families, the names of individuals should be connected to their particular family clans. A person is identified by his or her name from birth until death (and even after death) unless there are situations that demand a name change, such as when one finds that one’s name has negative connotations
which may result in negative experiences in life. Examples are Hluphekile ('the one who suffers'), a girl’s name; Zondiwe ('one who is hated'), a girl’s name; Mgwazeni ('stab him'), a boy’s name and Mbualeni ('kill him'), a boy’s name.

An individual is not considered a human being until a name is bestowed, for giving a name is the acknowledgement of the existence of that particular human being. Anim (1993) cites several beliefs surrounding the naming practices of Ghanaian tribes such as the Akan, the Ga and the Ewe who contend that a new-born child is considered a visiting spirit, merely the guest of a host family, and that the spirit will take seven days to decide whether or not the child likes this world. A naming ceremony takes place seven days after birth.

Social issues in choosing the name of a child

Among the issues that play a part in choosing a name are: gender, race and age of the name-givers; the time of birth; religious affiliation; the appearance – and many others as shown in the examples in (3).

(3a) Gratitude to God:
- Males: Bonginkosi ‘praise God’; Malibongwe ‘let his (God’s) name be thanked’; Bongumusa ‘thank God’s grace’.
- Females: Babongile ‘they are grateful’; Bongiwe ‘thanked for’; Sibongile ‘we are grateful’.

(3b) Parents’ hope and prayer:
- Males: Vusumuzi ‘rebuild the homestead’; Bhekumuzi ‘look after the family’.
- Females: Lethukuthula ‘bring peace’; Thobeka ‘be humble’.

(3c) Death-related names:
- Males: Zokuva ‘will die’; Bhekithuna ‘follows the death of the other siblings’.
- Female: Nokuva ‘mother of death’.

(3d) Weekday-of-birth names:
- Males: uMqqibelo ‘a boy born on a Saturday’; uSonto ‘a boy born on a Sunday’.
- Females: Nomqibelo ‘a girl born on a Saturday’; Nomasono ‘a girl born on a Sunday’.

Giving a name comprehends the totality of the world of African experience including the physical environment as well as all spirit beings acknowledged by a given group. The network of relationships among the Zulu people, and indeed among most Africans, is remarkably extended and deep. In fact, the words ‘family’, ‘brother’ and ‘sister’ define far more for Africans than they do for their average western counterparts. A family usually includes one’s direct parents, grandparents and great-grandparents, brothers, sisters, uncles, and aunts, cousins, nieces and nephews. Among the African peoples, children refer to any of their uncles or aunts as their designated father or mother, and to their nephews and nieces as their designated brothers and sisters. A boy child may be named after his grandfather or great grandfather, and for a baby girl the name of her grandmother or aunt may be used.

Elderly people do not usually ask a child his or her personal name but, instead, the name of his or her parents. For example, one would ask, Ungumfana kabani? (‘Whose child are you?’) or Uzalwa ngubani? (‘Who gave birth to you?’). A response to such a question could be, Ngingumfana kaEllifasi Ngubane (‘I am Elphas Ngubane’s son’). In today’s world, it is a desired practice to find names that are linked to the father’s for purposes of identification and lineage as shown in the examples in (4).

(4a) uDumisani kaMaliyavuza Shange. ‘Dumisani son of Maliyavuza of the Shange clan.’
(4b) uNdela kaBhekifa Ntshangase. ‘Ndela son of Bhekifa of the Ntshangase clan.’
(4c) uSipho kaJalimane Ngubane. ‘Sipho son of Jalimane of the Ngubane clan.’

This was the norm in the past when people were linked through their fathers: uShaka kaSenzangakhona (‘Shaka son of Senzangakhona’); uNdlela kaSompisi (‘Ndlela son of Sompisi’); uDinizulu kaSolomoni (‘Dinizulu son of Solomon’). The use of ka- is mainly observed among male names, and in certain instances females may also choose to be addressed with ka- followed by the father’s or the maiden surname, for example: uMkabayi kaJama (‘Mkabayi daughter of King Jama’); Zanele kaSothondose (‘Zanele daughter of Sothondose’), Sbungile kaNdoda (‘Sibongile daughter of Ndoda’).

The invisible members of a particular clan, such as ancestors and spiritual beings, are regarded as powerful, and superior to human beings. For instance, the significance and greatness of King Jama is duly acknowledged and honoured by the living. Neglect of the importance of the ancestors could spell disaster for human beings and the community and therefore the ancestors may also be recalled in personal names given to children, especially in cases where particular ancestors or spirit beings are held to have been reincarnated in individual children. The presence of the ancestors is particularly felt in the community.

Women are linked through their maiden names. If the woman is married to another clan the prefix ka-, la- or ma- is put in front of the woman’s own clan name (see Example (5)).

(5a) uKaMasondo
(5b) uKaMsomi
(5c) uLaMathenjwa
(5d) uLaMangwenya
(5e) uMaMthembu
(5f) uMaNgubane

The use of ka- refers to the maiden surname and it is used interchangeably with la- as in the following examples: KaMasondo or LaMasondo, KaNgwenya or LaNgwenya. The prefix ka- was aligned to the name of the bride’s father for married women which is similar to the male counterpart, for example, uShaka kaSenzangakhona, uNdlela kaSompisi, uNozishada kaMaqthoboza. The use of ka- represents ‘son of’, but in the case of married women it will be ‘daughter of’. When a woman gets married it is customary for her to be addressed by her maiden surname instead of her personal name as a way of showing respect.
Personal names are mainly used by close family members and friends. The use of the maiden surname creates a link in the new family so that the bride's clan name is not forgotten. The use of ka-, la- or ma- in front of the clan name has orthographic and phonological implications: the clan name carries two capital letters instead of one, for example, MaMthembu, MaNgubane, MaJili. The prefix la- is used with nasals that are followed by vowels (see Examples (5c) and (5d)), but before syllabic nasals the prefix ma- is used (see Examples (5e) and (5f)).

The use of the father's personal name is still common among married women of the Tembe community in northern Zululand. Here a married woman is identified by the name of her father by means of the prefix Mi- instead of Ka-.

Examples (5e) and (5f).

This practice links married women to their fathers' personal names (Jackson, James, David, Nkomishi and Sayidi) and differs from the Zulu practice of linking through surnames. It is reminiscent of a traditional Zulu practice whereby ka- was used before personal names of the bride's father, but this practice has been superseded in modern days by the use of the prefix with the father's clan name.

**Linguistic implication of names**

An investigation into the techniques of naming entails research into the mechanism and the process of naming practices. Such techniques look at the individual grammatical items which change their function when they become part of names. Nicolaisen (1976 in Nyembe, 1994:21), concerns himself particularly with the semantic and associative aspect of naming:

If we take it as given that there is necessity or urge to name, naming might then be paraphrased as the process by which words become names by association. Indeed it is now apparent that words cannot become names without passing through an associative level of meaning which is an essential bridge without which words would at the most be particularising lexical labels. Without this intermediate semantic level, there would be no systemic contrast between words and names.

Nicolaisen thus argues that a word becomes synonymous with a name if it has passed through the process of association. Sorensen (in Raper, 1987:78) termed the sound-sequence the designator, the inherent meaning the designatum, and the entity referred to the denotatum. The 'designator' refers to the morphological structure of the word whereas the 'designatum' refers to the underlying meaning. This includes any connotations which may be attached to the word. The 'denotatum' is that thing which is referred to by the 'designator'. In other words, the denotatum is a reference to the real world. These concepts are explained as follows in Ngubane (2000), applied to the name Umfaniseni:

(7a) Designator: Umfaniseni 'who does he resemble'

This is a Class 1a noun with a complex stem as it has more than one grammatical morpheme but only one lexical morpheme. It consists of a Class 1a class marker 'u' and object concord 'm' representing 'him' (referring to the boy umfana).

(7b) Designatum: The name Umfaniseni is usually given to a boy when the father does not accept the legitimacy of the child and implores the family members to acknowledge the truth about the child's legitimacy. In cases such as these the family knows the truth about the child whilst the father is in the dark. The father wants to convey his suspicion to the family members. The verb stem -fanisa means 'resemble'.

(7c) Denotatum: This will be any boy with this name that we know.

The explanation of the above terms is in terms of the distinction between conceptual and pragmatic meaning. According to Raper (1987), conceptual meaning is inherent in the name itself — in the designator or linguistic sign. Conceptual meaning includes both the lexical meaning and the grammatical meaning. The grammatical meaning specifies that the referent of a proper name belongs to some class of entities, hence the distinction between place names, personal names, and the like. Raper (1987:81) further explains: 'These classes are [...] subdivided, personal names into men's and women's names, place-names into toponyms, hydronyms and onomyns'.

Raper distinguishes the components of conceptual meaning as lexical and grammatical meaning and points out that pragmatic or associative meaning has a bearing on the extra-linguistic entity to which the name refers. He (Raper, 1987:81) identifies the different types of pragmatic meaning in the following way:

Connotative meaning generally includes things known about the entity. Thus, for example, The Point, The Bluff, Marine Parade and South Beach could be connoted by the name Durban. Affective, expressive or emotive meaning is the result of personal emotions one may feel towards an entity, possibly as the result of a pleasant or unpleasant experience there, the physical appearance of the place, and so on. Stylistic and social meaning is related to temporal attitudes. The phonic-associative meaning is related to associations engendered by the sound of the name.

According to Nicolaisen (1976 in Nyembe, 1994:21), names reflect three semantic levels:

(i) the lexical level: the dictionary meaning of a word or words comprising the names

(ii) the associative level: the reason why the particular lexical or onomastic item was used in the naming process [and which] is also the level of connotative meaning and
(iii) the onomastic level: the meaning of a denotative name as a name, that is, its application based on lexical and associative semantic elements, but usually no longer dependent on them.

The three levels mentioned above indicate that names are unique and they thus have unique reference. Names are expressed in linguistic terms and innovations. They are usually formed from lexical items by the adding of onomastic meaning to lexical meaning, with the former frequently replacing the latter altogether. For example, the lexical meaning of the word, *Ufunani* is ‘What do you want?’. The word as it stands is a non-onomastic item, since it carries a lexical meaning only. When the word *funani* is bestowed on a child for a specific reason, it becomes a name and, thus, an onomastic item. As a name, *Funani* will have denotative meaning for the family, the child and the society, and associative meaning as a result of its arising out of the actions of either of the parents. For example, a husband is attracted to other women, although his wife has most of the qualities that other women have. The wife may then, by naming her child *Funani*, be asking her husband obliquely, ‘What do you want from other women that I do not have?’. The question is thus posed ‘safely’, but clearly, through the naming of the newborn child.

Most Zulu names are formed by the addition of prefixes or suffixes to a stem. The lexical meaning of an item undergoes a semantic shift when the item becomes the name of a person. Prabhakaran (1997:6) claims that for many onomasticians the establishment of the real meaning of a proper name is a basic requirement of onomastic investigation. The sound sequence, phonological and morphological changes in the written form, both at diachronic and synchronic levels of proper names are all properly basic elements of onomastic study.

**Feminine names derived from masculine names**

Personal names occur in all languages, forming a special group within the vocabulary of a language while observing phonological, morphological, syntactic, orthographic or semantic rules. In isiZulu, boy’s names can be made feminine by the addition to a masculine name of either the tense marker suffix -ile (see Table 1) or the prefix No- (see Table 2).

In the mind of the name-giver, the concept starts with a male name, as males are the most desired children among most Zulu families. For example, the noun *imfundo* (education), which is in Class 5 (Class 9 according to Meinhof’s (1932) classification), may be used to name a boy by changing it into a Class 1a noun: *imfundo* thus becomes *uMfundo*. If the child happens to be a girl, a prefix No- will be added to the noun, which then becomes *uNomfundo* with the class prefix *u-* in Class 1a. Socially, education is the most significant element in life and children are encouraged and motivated to study so that they may live a better life. Such a name sends a message to the family and the community that education is important and this becomes a constant reminder to the name-bearer. A child who receives such a name is motivated to study hard; hence the name poses a challenge: the achievement of excellence. It also signifies a wish by parents for the child to receive a good education.

There are male names that are not modified by the prefix No- to form girls’ names, but they are modified in other ways. The difference between ‘blessed’ and ‘blessing’ for boys and girls is an indicator of the difference in value of male and females in Zulu culture. In the girl’s case she is blessed because she is reproductive (*inzalabantu*), while in the boy’s case, he is a blessing to the family as the one who fathers children (*usobaba*). The verb stem *busisa* (‘bless’) is used for the formation of both the male and female names, but their morphological structures differ. The male name is derived from the noun *isibusiso* (‘blessing’) which

| Table 1: Girls’ names derived from boys’ names by means of the suffix -ile |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| **Male**       | **Female**       |
| Themba ‘trust’   | Thembile          |
| Thula ‘quiet’    | Thulile           |
| Thokozani ‘rejoice’ | Thokozile         |
| Zanda ‘they have increased’ | Zandile         |
| Thuthuka ‘the one who has made progress’ | Thuthukile     |
| Mafika ‘arrived’ | Fikile            |

| Table 2: Girls’ names derived from boys’ names by means of the prefix No- |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| **Male**       | **Female**       |
| Sipho ‘gift’    | Nosipho          |
| Bonga ‘be thankful’ | Nokubonga/Bongi |
| Musa ‘kindness’ | Nomusa           |
| Nhlanthla ‘luck’ | Nhlanthla        |
| Mpumelelo ‘success’ | Mpumelelo    |
| Lwazi ‘knowledge’ | Nolwazi         |
| Thula ‘quiet’   | Nokuthula        |
| Mzamo ‘effort’  | Nomzamo          |
| Ntuthuko ‘progress’ | Nontuthuko     |
is based on the active form of the verb, whereas the female name is based on the passive form, -busiswa (‘blessed’). The boy’s name is thus USibusiso (‘blessing’) and the girl’s name would be USibusisiwe (‘been blessed’) or UBusiswa (‘blessed’).

**New trends in naming**

The focus on names of European origin has shifted to names derived from other African languages such as isiXhosa and Sesotho. The names are adapted from other languages to comply with isiZulu sound and structure as shown in Example (8).

(8a) Buyiswa ‘been brought back’ (isiXhosa) > Buyisiwe (isiZulu) (female)
(8b) Andisiwe ‘the family has increased’ (isiXhosa) > Andiswa (isiZulu) (female)
(8c) Afika ‘children have arrived’ (isiXhosa) > Mafika (isiZulu) (male)
(8d) Palesa ‘flower’ (Sesotho) > Palisa (isiZulu) (male)
(8e) Tshepo ‘hope’ (Sesotho) > Tsepo (isiZulu) (male)

The structure of names is affected by the change in both cultural and social status quo of the Zulu community. As culture is dynamic, names have changed to comply with time. Zulu people have intermarriages with Sotho and Xhosa people and thus names from these languages have been adopted by Zulu people. In the past, vowel-commencing names were more common among Xhosa people, but this trend has increasingly taken root among isiZulu speaking people in the post-2000 era as reflected in the examples in (9).

(9a) Andile (male) ‘men have increased’
(9b) Ayanda ‘men are on the increase’
(9c) Azande ‘let the boys be on the increase’
(9d) Andiswa (female) ‘girls have been increased’
(9e) Aphelele or Anele (female) ‘girls are enough’
(9f) Aphiwe (female) ‘the family has been given a girl’
(9g) Amahle (female) ‘girls are beautiful’

Personal names belong to Noun class 1a, marked morphologically by the prefix u-. The prefix is deleted in the address form, that is, when a person is addressed by his or her name. Usually this class contains personal nouns referring to family relations or kinship terms and proper names. In the case where such proper names begin with a vowel, a hyphen will be used to separate the vowels as shown in the examples in (10).

(10a) U-andile
(10b) U-ayanda
(10c) U-azande or uZande
(10d) U-andiswa
(10e) U-aphelele or u-Anele
(10f) U-aphiwe
(10g) U-amahle

Long (compound) names have become less popular in modern times compared to the past where names such as Mzikayifani (a boy’s name meaning that homesteads are not similar), Madodenzani (a boy’s name meaning what do men do?), Mphikeleli (a boy’s name meaning one who persists), Nompumelelo (a girl’s name meaning success), Ntombizobuso (‘girls of the kingdom’) were most common.

**Conclusion**

This article has demonstrated that names and naming practices belong to the social and cultural systems of a particular society (in this case the Zulu society). Names reflect the values, beliefs and traditions that are expressed through language. The morphological structure, meaning and social implications of Zulu names were addressed.

In conclusion, the relationship between the elements crucial to naming is summarised by Mphande (2006:104):

> Language is part of the culture; it is the primary means of communication (Salzmann, 2004:48). But too are customary acts of behavior. Taboo, (an inhibited expression), for example, can be either behavioral (such as incest taboo) or linguistic (such as the Zulu hlonipha, or speech avoidance), and the protective sanctions are much the same. Language is a guide to social reality, and human beings at times seem to be at the mercy of the language that has become the medium of expression for their society. Therefore, from this perspective, experience is largely determined by the language habits of the community, and that each separate structure represents a separate reality.

It is therefore recommended that the naming of children should be taken seriously so that inconsistencies abhorrent to African practices may be avoided. The article has argued that naming practices have moved beyond gender and ethnic boundaries. New trends in name-giving were pointed out, as reflected in unique examples of vowel-commencing names that have become popular among the Zulu people. It was also observed that long names have become less popular in the modern days compared to the past. In a recent analysis by Koopman (2010) contemporary data shows that only a very small proportion of children’s names given today are unique (less than 3%), and that there is now a central ‘core’ onomastic from which parents draw names. This is a valid comment and it is reflected in examples provided above. Parents have moved from typical Zulu names to African names that are mainly derived from other African languages. It is rare for children born after 1994 to have English middle names.

It is also noteworthy that Zulu naming practices are similarly observed in other countries on the African continent and in the Diaspora.

**References**


