

Chapter 2 - The Pragmatic Impact of Names in Africa: A Case Study of the Khelobedu and Tshivenda Naming Practices

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Abstract

Personal naming, particularly the naming of babies, has attracted the attention of many onomasticians in the last three decades. However, these studies fail to approach this phenomenon from a pragmatic point of view, where personal names bestowed to babies are viewed from a speech act position, even though some of the babies' names carry some force of action. This is, therefore, the major force and reason behind this study initiative. Subsequently, this study, viewed through the Speech Act Theory, aims to explore the pragmatic effect behind the personal names bestowed to Balobedu and Vhavanḁa babies from Limpopo province, Mopani and Vhembe districts, respectively. The paper was qualitative and employed a face-to-face semi-structured interview to understand the meaning behind the babies' names from the participants' positions and social settings. Data was collected from three (3) Khelobedu speakers and four (4) Tshivenda speakers, ranging between 30 and 78 years old. Snowball sampling technique was used in the study to gain access to the Tshivenda and Khelobedu participants who could shed light on their naming practices. The findings revealed that Khelobedu and Tshivenda's naming practices used aspects of

Speech Act Theory in their names, such as commands, requests, expressive and commissives. The Speech Act Theory, a subsection of pragmatics, reveals itself in the personal names analysed in this paper. The audience can extract true meaning from these personal names, as the meaning contained in them comes directly from the name-giver with clear intentions of why they were chosen. The paper concludes that the Speech Act Theory aspect, such as commands, requests, expressions, and commissives, are found in Khelobedu and Tshivenda baby naming.

Keywords: Speech Acts, Khelobedu, Tshivenda, personal names, pragmatics

Introduction

Anthroponym has been explored from different angles by different scholars. For example, there are several studies on the communicative functions of personal names (Agyekum 2006; Sengani 2015; Mensah & Mekamgoum 2017; Mandende, Cekiso & Rwodzi 2019; Mahwasane & Tshifaro 2019; Zungu 2019; Mkhize & Muthuki 2019; Mamvura 2021). Many scholars have explored African personal naming processes and patterns from the communicative point and identity formation. Some scholars (Babane 2015; Mamvura 2021) and polygynous marriages (Zungu 2019; 2021) went further to explore death-related personal names. However, very few studies on onomastics, especially anthroponyms, focused on the linguistic aspect of naming, such as the speech act (Ekanjume-Ilongo, Adesanmi & Kolobe 2020; Hadiati 2019; Perianova 2015), despite the general agreement by onomastic scholars that African names serve different functions, i.e., being pointers and identifiers, and that they further carry the communicative function in the main.

Therefore, in this paper, we focus on the Speech Act Theory (SAT) as a lens through which we aim to explore the personal naming practice between Balobedu and Vhavenda of South Africa. Personal naming as part of the language and culture also serves as a communication tool, so the pragmatic¹ importance carried by personal names cannot be ignored.

¹ Pragmatics is a field of linguistics concerned with what a speaker implies and a listener infers based on contributing factors like the situational context, the individual's mental states, the preceding dialogue, and other elements.

Furthermore, if African personal names communicate the values and socio-cultural beliefs of African society, we then believe that they do so because of their communicative force. After navigating through the plethora of literature on this phenomenon, we understood that these personal names performed certain actions and were deemed illocutionary when bestowed to their bearer, either directly on the bearer, on the name-giver or to the family and society at large. As a result of its nature, SAT is appropriate for this paper as it enhanced the comprehension of the illocutionary forces that personal names present when bestowed on an individual or an entity.

A truism that African personal names are deemed communicative is supported by several studies that probed the communicative functions of the different types of names. For example, names of people, buildings, streets, towns, rivers, schools, names of languages, and attire (Agyekum 2006; Sengani 2015; Mandende, Cekiso & Rwodzi 2019; Mensah 2019; Mahwasane & Tshifaro 2019; Mphela & Mogoboya 2019; Babane 2017; Boluwadura 2019; Zungu 2019 2021; Rakgogo & Zungu 2021) among others reported on the communicate functions of the African personal names.

Furthermore, other scholars also explored the linguistic aspects of these names, such as their morphological and syntactic formation, i.e., their morphemes and lexical components (Koopman 1979; 1986; Mandende 2009; Mashiri, Chabata & Mukaro 2015; Mphasha, Mphela & Mogoboya 2021). Again, none of these studies scrutinized personal naming from a pragmatic point of view using SAT as a theory to explore the illocutionary forces brought about by these names within their specific cultures and societies. Therefore, this paper aims to contribute to the existing, albeit limited, the body of knowledge on onomastic about the illocutionary effect personal naming brings to studying anthroponyms. Therefore, it is against this backdrop that we want to close this gap.

Discussing communication and linguistic forms, Kaburise (2004:1) avers that ‘creating linguistic meaning or achieving communication between language participants is a dynamic process involving units, such as the form, context and function of the utterance’. African personal names are created out of the knowledge of a particular language. They are created from the linguistic aspects of such languages, i.e., verbs, nouns, and the combination of these lexical items, to achieve their communicative function. Kaburise (2012:36) supports this view by positing that ‘Meaning is created when speakers’ intentions are communicated to hearers, in other words, when a hearer accurately interprets a speaker’s speech act or speech function’.

Therefore, language, communication and meanings are intertwined. In a communication act, speakers exchange utterances that make them act in one way or another. In this regard, Hadiati (2019:700) quotes Austin (1962) when he states, 'The felicity condition was initially postulated by Austin, where he stated that an utterance was not merely an utterance; 'a speaker does something through the utterance. By uttering it, a speaker acts something as well; and it is widely known as a speech act'. For example, when speakers utter a sentence, making a promise, that would be an apt statement of 'promise.' As African personal names behave like statements, they can act as felicitous statements (Hadiati 2019). Therefore, this paper aims to explore this phenomenon by analyzing Khelobedu and Tshivenḁa's names.

In tandem with the above view, Uwaezuoke, Obianika and Alo (2016:71), in their study of the language used in personal naming by Oraifite Igbo of Nigeria, found a strong relationship with what the Speech Act Theory postulates, and they found that 'illocutionary forces and perlocutionary effects exist in Oraifite Igbo child naming ceremony'. Uwaezuoke *et al.* (2016:65) claim that in Oraifite Igbo, '... the action of the child naming in Igbo contains the four different speech acts classes which are Commissives, Directives, Expressives and Representative'. Uwaezuoke *et al.* (ibid) further posit, 'From the natural language processing perspective, the action of child naming is an interesting hybrid of the semantic genre and the pragmatic genre'. Information such as commissives, promises, commands, and requests could be extracted from the personal names in general.

Thus, interestingly, a study by Uwaezuoke *et al.* (2016) does not capture personal naming per se but focuses on the language used during the personal naming process. This is why we deemed it important to explore this phenomenon among the Balobedu and Vhaventḁa from the Limpopo province of South Africa.

Our paper explores the use of speech acts when bestowing African personal names by Balobedu and Vhaventḁa from Limpopo Province. Suppose onomasticians generally agree, as indicated above, that names perform a communicative function. In that case, there seems to be no doubt that communicative function is carried out through the so-called speech acts proposed by Austin (1962) and Searle (1989). Concomitantly, this phenomenon needs to be thoroughly investigated from the onomastic point of view, as the study of naming cannot be separated from the study of language and culture.

Against this background, we intend to explore the intended action and appropriateness of the statement from the personal naming from

Tshivenda and Xhosa perspectives. The choice of these two groups is motivated by the fact that these languages share some linguistic and cultural characteristics, and two of the authors are familiar with the languages, as they are the mother tongue speakers of these languages. Against this backdrop, we deem them to be relevant when comparing them while studying the speech act phenomenon in the African personal naming phenomenon. These languages are rich in socio-cultural aspects imbued in their naming systems. Xhosa and Tshivenda, like most African cultures, use their naming systems to communicate their lives' experiences, wishes, hopes, endearment, love of God, ancestors, unhappiness, and other emotions through the names of features, such as fauna and flora, human beings as well as buildings and attires. For these societies, personal naming is seen as a panacea for speaking the unspeakable within their respective cultures. Interestingly, only a handful of studies on African personal naming pay attention to this phenomenon, i.e., naming as a speech act.

Speech Act as a Conceptual Framework

A speech act is a subsection of pragmatics. Pragmatics focuses on the study of the meanings of utterances. Consequently, Yule (2017:141) defines pragmatics as '... the study of what speakers mean of 'speaker meaning' where (cultural) contexts determine the meanings of these utterances.

Moreover, Yule (2017:142) further avers, '... pragmatics is the study of 'invisible' meaning, or how we recognize what is meant even when it is not said or written'. This simply means an utterance or a statement has a message encoded in it, which is determined by the social context. Kaburise (2012: 38) concurs, and she says, 'Speech act theory is partly taxonomic and partly explanatory as it is not only an attempt to break down, scientifically and philosophically, the procedures involved in making an utterance but is also an attempt to classify systematically the reasons for the linguistic acts we make'. Consequently, the multiplicity of meanings from these personal names would be classified and explained according to the speech acts they produce.

Similarly, Xafizovna (2022:125) reports that social linguists 'shifted the study of the language from the structure into the language use in a specific social context'. Wittily, Dynel (2011:2) avows that 'Pragmatics is a field addressing communicative process (or language as deployed by its users) and its relation to language form, coupled with the cognitive and socio-cultural

study of language use'. This is possible if the participants in a conversation are both competent in this medium of interaction. Speech acts are intrinsic elements of pragmatics.

Linguistically, competent interlocutors must decode such messages and carry out the action that accompanies them. When people engage in a conversation, they do so to induce an action that needs to be carried out, directly or indirectly. Interestingly, the paper focuses on speech acts performed through the names bestowed on the Vhavenda and Balobedu children. Thus, a brief background about pragmatics cannot be ignored, as Speech Acts and pragmatics are so interwoven. A speaker would want a listener to carry out different actions in a conversation. These actions are declaratives, representatives, expressives, directives/commands, and commissives. This paper focuses on these actions when we analyze the names given to the children in the Balobedu and Vhavenda cultural settings.

While speech act refers to any utterance that evokes action between the interlocutors, it is also part of the broader communication process. Yule (2014:133) asserts that a speech act is '... the action performed by a speaker with an utterance ... an action performed via utterances'. Language users do so because they are competent in those languages and because effective communication in any language would reflect a speaker's competence in such a language and culture.

Regarding communicative competence, Kaburise advances that 'Communicative competence involves knowing not only the language codes, but also what to say to whom, and how to say it appropriately, in any given situation' (Kaburise 2004:4). Proper communication takes place when the speaker understands both the language and the culture within which the communication is taking place. Speakers competent in a language would manipulate the pragmatic strategies to their advantage in any communication event. Kaburise (ibid) bolsters this point by positing that communication embraces the knowledge of '... structural, social, cultural as well as functional knowledge that is required in verbal interactions'. This means that one cannot communicate effectively if one does not understand the culture of that society. In other words, communication is not just about language competence alone, as a language does not exist in a vacuum. This implies that language and culture are interwoven; one informs the other, culture informs how language needs to be used, while language articulates what is culturally correct and acceptable. When interlocutors speak, they reflect what conforms to their socio-cultural values. In support of this view, Kramsch

(2014) states that ‘language directs one into the social realities of society. The people’s worldview is built unconsciously on the language habits of the group. Rightly, as social beings, language users communicate and use it on society’s premises; society controls their access to linguistic and communicative means’. This supports the view that meaning cannot be determined without context, i.e., society’s premises. This view is in tandem with what pragmatics is all about.

For a statement to carry any meaning, there should be verbs, without which the sentence or statement is meaningless. The verbs that we focus on in this paper are performative verbs. Performatives are verbs that carry actions in a statement. Subsequently, Searle (1989:535) postulates, ‘Performative utterances are just statements with truth values like any other statements ...’. This means that these statements are felicitous. Searle (ibid) further contends that performative verbs...explain how the speaker can intend and the hearer can understand a second speech act from the making of the first speech act, the statement. The communication purpose is achieved when there is a common understanding between interlocutors. Common understanding can only be achieved if the interlocutors understand the language and culture of the medium of communication and conversation.

Then, SAT is pertinent for this paper, as for the name-givers to arrive at a relevant and acceptable communication through naming requires them to have mastered the language and culture of their communities. Personal names are communicative; therefore, like other linguists, name-givers benefit from their language and culture by successfully employing the SAT through their competence in the language and culture of the society to which they belong. In this regard, Kaburise (2004: 5) opines that communication is a complicated process, ‘The communication process involves complex verbal behaviour where the participants have to accommodate a variety of interconnected factors before meaning can be generated’.

Thus, data for this paper has been selected to corroborate this between Balobedu and Vhavenḁa name-givers. Perianova (2015:1) further supports this view when she says personal names ‘are also a marker of memory and trust as well as a signifier of status’. Perianova affirms what different scholars have alluded to; for example, African personal names act as a library for events, good or bad, that once befell the family or the communities, such events being recorded in the names that they bestow on their children. Regarding the naming process and its function in society,

Perianova (2015:12) further opines, ‘The socio-cultural associations conjured up by personal names change with every generation, and in this way, personal names become part of a new communicative code’.

Contemporary African Personal Naming Perspectives

The study of personal names, particularly African personal names, has attracted the attention of many scholars because of how they are created and because of their communicative function (Agyekum 2006; Chauke 2015; Sengani 2015; Zungu 2019; Ramaeba 2019; Mahwasane & Tshifura 2019; Mensah 2019; Mandende, Cekiso and Rwodzi 2019; Mkhize & Muthuki 2019; Batoma 2019; Mphela & Mogoboya 2019; Mamvura 2021; Zungu 2021).

African personal names are bound both religiously and culturally. Despite their communicative function, they also act as forms of identity formation. On the relationship of personal names with language and culture, Ramaeba (2019:21) states, ‘... names do not exist in a vacuum because they are part of people’s culture, so they cannot be isolated from the language and traditions of a society’. Similarly, Samuel and Ibrahim (2021:33) aver, ‘Human names give an insight into one’s identity, background, ethnicity and culture’. This is particularly true for African names because they are closely linked to the people’s cultural practices. Indeed, from the African perspective, personal names cannot be detached from the language and their society, as they encapsulate societal beliefs and values. In a similar vein, Sengani and Raphaelalani (2018) posit, ‘Tshivenda names carry information about the history, culture and the environment of the Tshivenda people’.

Sengani (2015), in his study on using personal naming as an empowering tool among the Vhavenda, found that name-givers utilize the strategy of personal naming as a form of empowerment. He found that mothers and fathers have recently taken up the role of baby-naming, the role performed initially by the grandmothers and grandfathers or elders in the family. These groups can no longer carry out this important traditional function of naming the newborn. Parents are empowered as they take up this role and bestow upon the newborn names of their choice, and these names communicate the parents’ feelings of joy, endearment, praise, etc. Sengani (2015) further avers that personal names bestowed upon children reflect the parents’ inner feelings unlike in the past when the family’s elders carried out this role.

Regarding the communicative function of personal names, Mandende, Cekiso, and Rwodzi (2019) also found that Tshivenda personal names serve a communicative function among the Vhavenda. When interlocutors speak, they perform actions by way of the words they utter, and when people name their children, they act through their words. Thus, the unique naming phenomenon cannot be divorced from pragmatics and speech act studies. When these names are created, words (language) are at play as the core of communication. There would be no speech act if what has been uttered (locution) does not have any performative force (illocution), and further, it does not induce an action (perlocution) from the listener/audience (Austin 1962).

On the other hand, the practice of baby-naming has its taboos in many African communities; for example, babies are not supposed to be named before they are of a particular age, ranging from seven days after birth (Anim 1993) to six (6) months, depending on the health of the baby (Mandende 2009). According to Koopman (1986), no specific process is set for this in some speech communities. However, African societies have different waiting periods before a child is named. Furthermore, when a child is born, it is put in seclusion for a time, as it is believed that it is fragile and can be easily infected by diseases. Only the mother and the selected older adults are allowed into the house where the baby is placed (Mandende 2009).

Similarly, rituals are performed in other communities when the babies are named (Mandende 2009; Sagna & Bassène 2016; Babane 2017). The belief around this process is that babies are being introduced to the lineage and protected against evil forces that are deemed to be behind the death of infants. In its nature, the baby naming process constitutes a broader communication aspect in African communities. While the baby naming process has a communicative function, they are also used for record-keeping (Mensah & Rowen 2019; Himmelmann 2006).

The Objective of the Study

The objective of this study is to explore the functions performed by the Khelobedu and Tshivenda baby personal names from the Speech Act perspective. Balobedu and Vhavenda unwittingly give their babies personal names not guided by what speech act theory proposes; however, the personal names they choose carry these different felicity conditions. As such, this pattern arouses interest in studying these baby names.

Methodology

This paper used a qualitative approach, conducting face-to-face semi-structured interviews with seven participants. This approach was deemed relevant because of its in-depth nature of inquiry (Lampek & Horvathne Kives 2015). The selected participants consisted of three Khelobedu speakers and four Tshivenda speakers, ranging between 30 and 78 years old. These participants were regarded as the custodians of these customs and traditions as these cultural groups have practiced them since time immemorial. Among the four Tshivenda speakers, three were males and one was a female whereas among the three Khelobedu speakers two were females and one was a male. These participants, who are the custodian of the culture, were selected through snowballing. The snowball sampling procedure was used by asking our first participants, from their respective villages, to refer us to others they know who practice the baby naming rituals (Lampek & Horvathne Kives 2015). The sampled participants are the ‘traditional’ doctors, *nanga* in Tshivenda and *ngaka* in Khelobedu, specialising in ‘*u thusa vhana*,’ ‘*go thusa ngwana*’ outdoorings (Anim 1993), in Tshivenda and Khelobedu respectively. In the following section, the findings are presented according to themes which are also guided by the Speech Acts Theory which is a theoretical framework for the study.

Findings

Felicity² Condition of Declaration

‘The declarative speech acts effect immediate changes in some current state of affairs. The speaker brings a change in the world’ (Ashfira & Harjanto 2021:27). In this category, though the name-givers or the name bearers are not in a position of authority like one possessed by a judge or a priest, yet, they declare that they are ready should anything happen to them. The message also means the opposite, i.e.; nothing will happen to them, come what may. The message also has a connotation of a challenge. One might say that the person who bestowed the name invited or challenged their enemies or competitors to attack them. This ability to challenge enemies or

² Felicity, is an ability to express one’s thought. The expression that are rendered through naming among Balobedu and Vhavenda, enables them to express themselves better through personal naming.

competitors is a demonstration of one's power and a demonstration that one is not scared. Table 1 below represents such personal names. These names have a connotation of a command. However, they do not end there. Although someone is commanded to do something, that is not an end, a means to an end. The result is the action the name bearer will take after the action has been taken. For example, *Mmbulaheni* is a command to the enemies or competitors to kill the child, but on the other hand, the message conveyed is that 'should you kill this child, you will see what I am made of'. This sounds like a warning.

It should be noted that sometimes African people specially use language. Although the linguistic form of the utterance means something, the expected action is the opposite. In this case, the name bearer appeals to the enemies not to kill the baby. For example, in *Mmbulaheni* (kill me), *Mmbangiseni* (contest) and *Gumani* (stop) from Table 1 below, the name-givers declare that if people to whom the message in the statement is directed continue to do what they are doing, they may face dire consequences. To support this view, one participant, a traditional healer aged 71, said, 'When a name like *Mmbulaheni* (Kill me) is bestowed on a baby, the name-giver challenges the enemies of the baby's family, either from the family or the community at large, because this name is used after there have been incessant deaths in the family'.

Table 1: Declarative Personal Names

Tshivenda	Gloss/ Meaning
<i>Mmbulaheni</i>	Kill me
<i>Mmbangiseni</i>	Fight me
<i>Mmboneni</i>	See me
<i>Nthatheni</i>	Chase me (away)
<i>Nkhakhiseni</i>	Mislead (me)
<i>Gumani</i>	Stop
Khelobedu	Gloss/meaning
<i>Mbolayeni</i>	Kill me
<i>Mboneni</i>	See me
<i>Mbontsheni</i>	Show me
<i>Kitimisani</i>	Chase away
<i>Ntebalene</i>	Forget me

Felicity Condition of Representative

‘Representative speech acts commit the speaker to something’s being the case, to the truth of the expressed proposition’ (Ashfira & Harjanto 2021:27). The names below reflect the state of mind of the name-giver. The analysis behind these names is that the name-giver communicated their feelings to the world. It is a clear demonstration of the hopes and aspirations of the name-giver. These names are pregnant with meaning. For example, names like *Dembe/ Surprise* could mean that the name-giver thought they were done with childbearing and suddenly an unexpected baby came.

Names like *Gundo/ Victory* convey a message of overcoming hurdles that have been there in life. It shows that the name-giver is in a happy and relaxed mood.

In Table 2 below, the data reveal that Balobedu and Vhavenḁa baby name-givers represent how they see the world around them when they bestow names onto their babies. In the same vein, they also express their feelings in these names. These are revealed by baby personal names such as *Mashudu* (Lucky) *Tshifhiwa* (Gift), *Mpho* (Gift) and *Lutendo* (Belief); *Tshedza* (Light) Tshivendḁa examples, and *Mashoto* (Lucky), *Dimakatšo* (Surprises), *Thabane* (Happy) (Comforter), through which both Balobedu and Vhavenḁa represent their world views.

Regarding the name *Tshifhiwa* (Gift), one parent, a female aged 73, said, ‘We got this child after the death of the first one. Again, I struggled with conception, so when we got this one after we had lost hope that we would conceive, we regarded her as a gift from God’.

Table 2: Representative Personal Names

Tshivendḁa	Gloss/ Meaning
<i>Bono</i>	Vision
<i>Dembe</i>	Surprise
<i>Gundo</i>	Victory
<i>Lutendo</i>	A belief
<i>Mashudu</i>	A lucky
<i>Mbofholowo</i>	Freedom
<i>Mpho</i>	A gift
<i>Tshedza</i>	Light
<i>Tshifhiwa</i>	A gift

Khelobedu	Gloss/ Meaning
<i>Dimakatso</i>	Astonishment
<i>Mashoto</i>	A lucky
<i>Mpho</i>	A gift
<i>Refilwe</i>	Given
<i>Seetša</i>	Light
<i>Thabane</i>	Happiness
<i>Tumelo</i>	Belief

Felicity Condition of Expressive

Kaburise (2012:39) sees expressive statements as ‘... speech acts which indicate the speaker’s psychological state of mind or attitude to some prior action or state of affairs. They are seen in greetings, apologies, congratulations, condolences, and expressions of giving thanks’.

In support of Kaburise’s view, Ashfira and Harjanto regard expressive as that kind of speech act that ‘expresses the psychological state of the speaker. It only expresses speaker’s attitude about their psychological state’ (Ashfira & Harjanto 2021:27). They express psychological states and can be statements of pleasure, pain, likes, dislikes, joy, or sorrow.

The names in Table 3 convey a message about the beliefs of the name-giver. They reflect how the name-givers judge themselves and the people around them. The name-givers express their opinions about their life experiences through the name-giving process. One could argue that these names express different states of mind like positivity, negativity, hope, loss of hope, etc.

In Table 3, on the felicity of expression, the findings indicate that baby names such as *Molamodi* (Mediator), *Refilwe* (We are given), *Sello* (Cry), *Mahlomola* (Sorrow) (Khelobedu), and *Rofhiwa* (We are given), *Rofunwa* (We are loved), *Ndamulelo* (Saviour), *Avhampfuni* (They do not like me), (Tshivenda) are all examples that reflect the name-giver’s world views and such views are respectively represented and expressed through baby names.

To support this view, a female parent, aged 30, had this to say about the name of their firstborn son, Rofunwa (We are loved), ‘This is our message to our parents for the love that they my husband and I. Both our parents brought us up well, and we are who we are because of them. So, we felt we needed to thank them, and did so by giving our firstborn this name’.

In addition, another participant, a male aged 53, said, ‘Regarding the name *Refilwe* (Given), parents of this baby regard his birth as a gift from God’.

Table 3: Expressive Personal Names

	Gloss/ Meaning
Tshivenda	
<i>Avhampfuni</i>	They do not love me
<i>Avhapfani</i>	No peace
<i>Dakalo</i>	Happiness
<i>Musandiwa</i>	The hated (one)
<i>Mususumeli</i>	Intruder
<i>Ndamulelo</i>	Saviour
<i>Rofhiwa</i>	Given
<i>Rofunwa</i>	We are loved
<i>Tshisammphiri</i>	Gossiper
Khelobedu	Gloss/ Meaning
<i>Khomotšo</i>	Consolation
<i>Madimabe</i>	Misfortune
<i>Mahlomola</i>	Sorrow
<i>Matshwenyego</i>	Struggle
<i>Modiidi</i>	Poverty
<i>Molamodi</i>	Mediator
<i>Molathegi</i>	Lost person
<i>Morebiwa</i>	The one they gossip about
<i>Ngaletjane</i>	Leave him/ her alone
<i>Refilwe</i>	Given
<i>Sello</i>	Cry

Felicity Condition of Directive/ Command/ Ordering

‘The directive speech act makes the speaker attempts the hearer to do something’ (Ashfira & Harjanto 2021:27). To buttress this point, Kaburise (2012:39) regards directives ‘... are typically broadcast within a social group and rely on a speaker for their success, being sanctioned by the community, institution, committee, or even a single person in the group, to perform such acts under specialised conditions’.

Through personal names, name-givers indirectly command the known or unknown individuals through messages carried by the names they bestow upon their offspring. One could argue that these baby names are based on the life experience of the name-givers.

Similarly, Khelobedu and Tshivenda also use the felicity condition of command when bestowing personal names on their babies. This finding is revealed in baby names such as *Lavhelesani* (Look), *Konḑelelani* (Tolerate), *Thetsheslesani* (Listen), *Vhonani* (See/ Watch), in Tshivenda, *Bonane* (See/ Watch), *Lebowane* (Be thankful), *Thakhalane* (Be happy), *Shumane* (Work) in Khelobedu. These examples give commands/ directives to people and communities at large. Baby personal names in this category are in the form of verbs. It should be noted that the Khelobedu and Tshivenda verbs that end with a suffix – ni are directed to more than one person.

In the same vein, one participant, a male aged 58, said this about a baby name *Retane* (Praise Him), ‘The name *Retane* means that the parents must praise God because this baby was born after a long struggle for conception. So, when the child was born, the name-giver decided to record their belief in God, as they view God as the one who intervened in their circumstance. The in-laws were also beginning to blame the wife as the one who had a problem regarding conceiving, so this birth came as a relief to the couple’.

Table 4: Command Personal Names

Tshivenda	Gloss/ Meaning
<i>Itani</i>	Do it
<i>Konḑelelani</i>	Be tolerant
<i>Lavhelesani</i>	See (Watch)
<i>Livhuwani</i>	Be thankful
<i>Rendani</i>	Praise
<i>Shonisani</i>	Be shameful
<i>Shumani</i>	Work
<i>Takalani</i>	Be happy
<i>Tendani</i>	Agree
<i>Thetsheslesani</i>	Listen
<i>Vhonani</i>	See (Watch)

Khelobedu	Gloss/ Meaning
<i>Bonane</i>	See (Watch)
<i>Lebowane</i>	Be thankful
<i>Mboneni</i>	See me
<i>Retane</i>	Praise
<i>Shumane</i>	Work
<i>Thakhalane</i>	Be happy

Felicity Condition of Commissives

‘Commissive speech act commits the speaker to some future course of action’ (Ashfira and Harjanto 2021:27). Kaburise (2012:38) concurs with Ashfira and Harjanto (ibid) and posits that ‘These acts commit the speaker to some particular future course of action. They may be in the form of promises, offers, threats, or vows’. Personal names presented in table 5 below are those through which the name-givers commit themselves to work for God. These names demonstrate the relationship between the name-giver and God. The names reflect that the name-givers are strong Christian believers. The ‘will’ in the translated version indicates that the name-giver is sure that what they wish for will happen, no matter what. This attitude of strong hope and commitment could be attributed to their strong belief in God. The names demonstrate the name-giver’s commitment to God. They have a strong bond with God. The last felicity condition found in the Khelobedu and Tshivenda baby names is commissives. This finding is revealed in names such as *Ridomushumela* (We will work for Him), *Ridomuthetshesela* (We will listen to Him), *Ridokunda* (We will win), and *Nkapene* (Talk about me), *Rorisane* (Praise him), and *Ntshomelene* (Work for him).

It should be noted that baby names under this category refer to God. The name-givers are committing themselves to work for God. These are kinds of names that are new in the Khelobedu and Tshivenda cultures and originate from Christianity. It is worth noting that these names reveal how the name-givers believe in God as part of their belief system.

One participant, who is a parent of baby-girl called *Ridomuthetshesela* (We will listen to Him), said, ‘This is our commitment as parents to God, we are saying through this name that, as Christians, we listen to God and nobody else, because we are who we are because of the Almighty, that is what we believe in. We commit ourselves to God’.

Table 5: Commitment Personal Names

Tshivenda	Gloss/ Meaning
<i>Ridokunda</i>	We will win
<i>Ridomupfa</i>	We will listen to Him
<i>Ridomurenda</i>	We will praise Him
<i>Ridomushumela</i>	We will work for Him
<i>Ridomutevhela</i>	We will follow Him
<i>Ridomuthetshesela</i>	We will listen to Him
Khelobedu	Gloss/ Meaning
<i>Nkapene</i>	Talk about me
<i>Rorisane</i>	Praise me
<i>Ntšhomelene</i>	Work for me

The findings further show that parents from Balobedu and Vhavenda communities, more than grandparents, have taken up the naming role; they are the name-bestowers for their children. One could conclude that this could result from modernisation (Sengani 2015; Mahwasane & Tshifaro 2019; Zungu 2021).

Discussion

The findings above indicate baby personal names' different functions in every society. While scholars generally agree on the communicative nature of African personal names, personal names perform certain functions, such as identity formation and documentation, when uttered or bestowed on an individual. From the speech act point of view, these functions are commands, declarations, expressions, commissives, or representations of the name-giver's worldview. The findings reveal that the Khelobedu and Tshivenda speakers, in particular, use personal names to come up with many felicity conditions when bestowing personal names to their babies. Communication which these speech communities perform through personal name-giving, either gives a command to someone in the family or society, or a name-giver commits to doing something or expresses their feelings about a situation in their lives, bestows a name as a sign of representing their views about the life experience or, lastly, they declare that if something happens, they are ready for it.

Similarly, neglecting the analysis of personal names from the speech

act point of view would be equal to neglecting the essence that these monikers carry, i.e., communication, and for that matter, to induce action. African personal names are tools for communicating ideas and views between interlocutors, visible, i.e., people, or invisible, i.e., ancestors and evil spirits. Due to the belief that Africans generally have ancestors that are believed to have a great influence on the living ones, communication through these monikers is also directed to them (Kaburise 2012). This is supported by Sagma and Bassène (2016) when they aver that rituals are performed after the death of an infant. Mandende (2009) argues that rituals are performed during the name-giving ceremony to inform the ancestors about the arrival of a new family member and to also ask for their protection of this member when they grow up. This ritual belief was reported by Mensah (2015) when he says that the Ibibio community of Nigeria also considers their traditional belief system when deciding on their babies' names. And when a baby follows some incessant death, the rites and rituals are performed to appease the spirit.

Moreover, these baby names are used to document and record-keeping people's worldviews (Himmelmann 2006). From the examples provided above, in addition to their different felicity functions, the findings reveal that baby personal names among Balobedu and Vhavenḁa of South Africa function as record keeping and documentation of the parent's life experiences, family and a community at large.

The findings of this paper concur with what many scholars, such as Anim (1993); Agyekum (2006); Mandende (2009); Kaburise (2012); Sengani and Raphalalani (2018); Ramaeba (2019); Mahwasane and Tshifaro (2019); Mensah and Rowen (2019); Mandende, Cekiso and Rwodzi (2019); Ekanjume-Ilongo, Adesanmi, and Kolobe (2020); Mamvura (2021); Samuel and Ibrahim (2021), to mention a few, regarding the importance of baby names within a broader community's sentiments, that are reflective of their beliefs and cultural systems. Through these names, communities communicate other felicities, as shown in this paper. Indeed, baby personal names are communicative. Similarly, Khelobedu and Tshivendḁa's baby personal names are part and parcel of Khelobedu and Tshivendḁa's linguistic repertoire as they play a role in their communication endeavour. By baby naming, a speech act is induced, and a speaker (a name-giver) acts out (Hadiati 2019). Baby naming enables interlocutors to speak the unspeakable among themselves (Zungu 2019). These names are not just labels and pointers but communicative tools; they are apparatuses for daily conversation. Be that as

it may, Balobedu and Vhavenḁa are regarded as competent speakers of these languages; therefore, whenever they hear or use these baby personal names, they can decode speech acts encapsulated in them (Ashfira & Harjanto 2021).

Conclusion

We conclude that Khelobedu and Tshivenḁa's examples were compared to highlight how African personal names reflect different felicity conditions such as declarative, command, representation, expression, and commissives, as performed by utterances in baby names that are part of their languages. Khelobedu and Tshivenḁa baby personal names, as enablers, can function as communicative tools and pass on different messages to the communities at large. Baby personal naming facilitates communication between interlocutors. Where people cannot confront each other about an issue, baby names become a germane strategy for this purpose. Balobedu and Vhavenḁa use baby personal names as apt instruments to pass messages politely and diplomatically to their targets without creating any disharmony. The paper managed to show how Khelobedu and Tshivenḁa baby's personal names could be explored using a Speech Act Theory. Furthermore, it is hoped that the findings from this paper will add to the abundance of knowledge regarding anthroponyms. This paper focused on personal naming as meaning-making through a speech act approach; other studies could focus on personal names as an identity formation.

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