

THE ETHNO-PRAGMATICS ANALYSIS OF DURU NAMES AMONG THE IGBO

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Abstract

The study of names has attracted attentions of linguists, philosophers, anthropologists, sociologist, and language analysts among others. Igbo names in general represent the world view of the Igbo people, and the names can be classified broadly into two: given and taken names. While given names embodies the desires, circumstances surrounding the birth of any child or the challenges facing the family, taken names reflect more of personality, achievement, ideology, dreams and aspirations of the bearer. This study focuses on the later and specifically on names associated with Duru, and compares them with eze related names. Like eze, the reoccurrence of Duru affix in some Igbo names has social, economic, and religious undertones. Data were collected from people that bear names associated with duru, as well as some selected elders who are the custodians of the culture of the areas where these names are in operation. The qualitative research method was used to translate, analyse and explain the data from the anthroponomical, semiotic and linguistic perspectives. The data were classified in three major groups: communities, title and personal names. The study reveals a close link between duru and eze: the names are solely for male, and is more of taken name than given name. In other words, eze is synonymous with duru names, and like eze, it is a title and honorific name; given to great men, title holders, warriors, and distinguished men of their time.

Keywords: Title, Names, Onomastics, Duru, Language

Introduction

Language is a manifestation and description of the complexity and diversity of the peoples' way of life. The language of the people is manifested in their naming systems and practices, family, kinship, political, occupational, religious beliefs, law, funeral activities, etc. (Agyekum, 2006). Human personal names are generally considered to be universal or what Agyekum considered as "universal cultural practice". There seems to be no documented cases of people or town/community without a name. Every society in the world give names as tags to its people, but how the names are given, the practices and rituals involved and the interpretations attached to the names vary from one culture to another (Agyekum, 2006). Personal names permeate our semiotic experience, and are an essential element of many social interactions. According to Mensah and Rowan (2019), "names project belief, norms, attitudes, emotions and mores that can facilitate a broader understanding of African and its people". Knowing someone includes knowing their name(s), and a name is often the first information offered upon meeting a stranger.

Name is an important piece of information which is heavily influenced by peoples' cultural backgrounds. According to Udoeye (2018:275), names give information about the people, their belief, history and their universe. Name draws

affinity between the signifier and the signified. The essence of the thing it represents or identifies lies on the name that it bears.

African names are socially constructed by means of prescribed roles and expectations regarding proper behaviour, attitude, division of labour and beliefs about natural abilities and propensities. According to Mensah (2016), names are very important tool for social interaction and the purpose of naming is to provide a symbolic system of identification which encodes ethnic identity, culture and nationality.

The Igbo people

The Igbo is one of the three major tribes in Nigeria, alongside Hausa and Yoruba. The Igbo live in the south-eastern part of Nigeria and occupies five states: Enugu, Abia, Imo, Anambra, Ebonyi and some parts of Rivers, Delta and Edo states. The word "Igbo" is used to refer to the Igbo people, their language, land and culture (Onyemaechi, 2007). Although there have been phenomenal changes in the Igbo traditional society due to colonisation, modernisation, education, information technology, population growth, infrastructure and human resources development, the very essence of Igbo world view, their belief system, hospitality, marriage, kinship and non-kinship networks, the Igbo traditional ways of governance and affinity to the fatherland, to a large

extent, are still upheld by the Igbo (Nwagbara, 2007:99).

Among the Igbo, people bear multiple names, each bearing unique identity to the bearer, among them is taken names. Taken names are additional names taken by individuals in various Igbo communities when the person has come of age. It is a name with which people call and greet one another anywhere they meet. It is very common and preferred among adults. Taken names include praise names, title names, sobriquet used in greeting (Oha, 2009). These names generally teach a philosophy of life without any tickling of the ego. Praise name as the name implies praises, and is backing up the traditional titles one has taken or in testifying to one's competence in various vocations such as hunting, herbal healing, and artistic productions. Praise name also expresses the Igbo philosophy as well as how one perceives life.

Among taken names is title name. Title name is a name attached to the title in which one is conferred. It is given/taken in recognition of what the person has become, or what they have made themselves for others to recognize. Title names are used for greeting among the people, and according to Oha (2009), it is considered abnormal among the Igbo not to honour someone who has been properly honoured by tradition, regardless of the person's age leading to a saying that *nwata kwọchaa aka o soro okenye rie nri* (if a child washes his hand clean, he eats with the kings and elders). Greeting an individual with his or her title name (*aha echichi*) is a way of showing respect for tradition. According to (Oha (p.104), "the one who greets with the title name and another who is greeted are brought together in a moment's conversation on, and perpetuation of those philosophies intended/initiated by the bearer of the name(s). This is because the Igbo attach much importance to names, prompting the saying, "*ezi aha ka ego*" (good name worth more than wealth). The knowledge about Igbo names gives insight into the philosophy, thought, environment, religion, language and culture of the Igbo. People's names gradually increase in number (from birth to adulthood). Some names are given and used by close relatives and others who are in contact with the bearer, while some other names

are acquired at older age by personal achievement or hand skills.

This paper focuses on title names, specifically on names associated with duru. Duru names are not arbitrary; they are based on socio-cultural and ethno-pragmatic contexts of the Igbo.

The Concept of Duru among the Igbo

Duru is a form of honorary title name (*aha otutu*). It is found to be predominant among some sections of Igbo. **Duru** (great-man of utility) is associated with greatness, strength, divinity, valour, wealth, and honorific in Igbo. The origin is an extension of Ozo-ukwu in Igbo land, an honourific title given to a man who is not a failure or weakling, but who have distinguished themselves in service to humanity using their energy, wisdom, wealth and material resources, as well as those who distinguished themselves in some areas of human endeavor such as trade, farming, wars, and wrestling. The name is not given to any child at birth except where it's inherited either by reincarnation or through the father.

In Igbo tradition, first sons are regarded as "Okpara/Opara". In conferment of traditional titles, the Ozo and Nze titles are exclusively reserved for the first sons of the families in some part of the Igbo. This implies that other sons of the family cannot take Ozo or Nze titles (though there are some exceptions). The traditional restrictions which forbid other sons of the family other than the first son to take traditional titles like Ozo, necessitated the emergence of the "Duru" traditional title.

However, some people see duru as an honourable title equates to Nze and Ozo among the osu who are not free-born and are not entitle to take the titles. According to this version, duru title is the highest among the osu and the title is seen as honourable as Ozo. Anyone that takes duru associated names can be called upon anytime to represent his people, give advice and stand on the truth when disputes arises especially land dispute. The titles are given to hardworking and respectable men. Duru title holders are people with unquestionable character. They are perceived and accorded respect as Nze and Ozo.

Previous Studies

The study of names is a multidisciplinary field that has occupied the attention of philosophers of language, anthropologists, linguists and ordinary people. Personal names can best be analysed by a combination of both philosophical and anthropological notions. Many studies in African linguistics, onomastics and cultural anthropology have investigated the phenomenon of naming among Africans. Some of these studies include: Agyekum (2006) who have researched the naming system of the Akan in Ghana, Koopman (2002), and Moyo (2002) investigated some South African names, while Gerba (2015) worked on topology of Cameroonian names, among others.

There have been several scholarly works on the Igbo personal names. Most of these works have studied personal names (anthroponyms) in different dimensions. For example, Emeka-Nwobia (2016) examines the namesake (Ogbo) phenomenon in Ehugbo cultural area. According to him, naming systems reflect the complicated systems of ascribing identities based on certain cultures, conventions and worldviews of the people. It explores the naming convention of Afikpo Igbo, the similarities and differences with other Igbo cultural areas. However, Asadu and Samson (2014) assessed names associated with Chi among the Igbo. According to the study, the reoccurrence of Chi or Chukwu affixes in Igbo names has both cultural and religious undertones.

Similar to Asadu and Samson (2014) is a study by Mmadike (2014), who assessed names associated with *ala* among the Igbo. According to him, *ala* names or anthroponyms used to be personal names given to male children. These names bear testimonies to the overwhelming influence of *Ala/ani/ana* over the various aspects of Igbo life. The names associated with *ala* according to Mmadike reflects the various dispositions of the name givers: providential, precatory, and recognition. The study reveals that people no longer bear *ala* names as their forenames only as surnames by families whose fore-bearers had such names as their forenames.

Oha (2009) assessed praise names among the Igbo. According to him, praise names are very important means through which individuals in the Igbo society generally articulate and express their ideologies, boast about their abilities and

accomplishments, as well as criticize and subvert the visions of the other. In a similar study Solomon-Etefia and Ideh (2019) assessed the various categories of praise names among the Awgbu people. The study provides empirical evidence on why there is a shift from given names to taken names. The study revealed that name-bearers and users prefer praise names for reference and address because the names reflexively define who they are in terms of their social personalities, dreams, aspirations and culture.

From literature, many studies have been conducted on Igbo names. No one (to the best of our knowledge) has done any study on *duru*, or names associated with it, which is a very important name among some section of the Igbo. This study sets to bridge this gap.

Theoretical Framework

The study of personal names is an interesting area of research that comes under onomastics and anthropology (anthroponomastic). Anthropology is the study of humankind, including the comparative study of societies and cultures, while onomastics is the scientific study of names, and goes beyond looking at the linguistic features of names, but also looks at the sociocultural and psychological factors that influence the choice of a name given to an entity by the name giver (Mbali, 2005). Anthroponomastic studies “are informed by the theory that identifies an interface between a people’s language use and their cultural practices. It reflects how people use language to act their culture and how they use their language as a powerful tool to view and understand their world view. According to Mbali (2005), names are social entities relevant to a particular society. It is in names that one can learn the dynamics of certain societies. It is for this reason that a scholar can never study names in isolation, without studying the society where they are given. Language can therefore be used to view and understand the social practices and daily activities of a society. Naming is universal cultural practice but the social context from which the names are derived and the interpretations attached to the names vary from one society to another. The study also extends to the nature of the naming patterns, and the range of meanings communicated by the names. Anthroponomastic or what Duranti (1997) calls

linguistic anthropology is concerned with the place of language in its wider social and cultural context, its role in forging and sustaining cultural practices and social structures. According to Duranti (1997: 2) “linguistic anthropology is the study of language as a cultural resource and speaking as a cultural practice.” This study deals with title names with special focus on duru related names which is peculiar to some section of Igbo people.

Methodology

The data for the study were collected from people that bear duru names, as well as some selected elders who are the custodians of the culture of the areas where these names are in operation. The respondents were between the ages of 37 and 81 years old, who were chosen by means of random sampling. Metadata on each respondent such as age, education, occupation and religious affiliation were noted, given that these social variables could

influence the choice of title name. Twenty five respondents (all male) constituted the population of study. The study sought to find out from the primary respondents the origin, sources, social significance and procedure for acquiring the name as well as how the name is perceived both by themselves and by the wider society. The respondents were interviewed as well as the traditional chiefs. Interviews were largely anchored in their evaluation of title names and the changing socio-cultural circumstances that have given rise to the names. Duru associated names were also sourced from different social media. In total, a corpus of 57 names associated with duru as data for this study were generated.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion

This section presents data collected for this study, analysis and discussion follow.

Table 1: Data on Names Associated with Duru

1	Durueze	20	Duruemero	40	Duruemedobi
2	Duruokanumee	21	Duruihie	41	Duruihemeje
3	Duruagbakawe	22	Duruaghazie	42	Duruakubo
4	Durunwaneri	23	Durunwanebu	43	Duruenwereaku
5	Duruofo	24	Duruiheme	44	Durunwune
6	Duruemenahu	25	Durunkemnaekwu	45	Duruawuzie
7	Duruagbako	26	Duruihuoma	46	Durunwa
8	Duruji	27	Duruoha	47	Duruoshimili
9	Duruagwu	28	Duruigbo	48	Duruibe
10	Durujiaku	29	Duruebube	49	Duruoba
11	Duruno	30	Durugo	50	Duruobi
12	Duruemeruo	31	Duruiheako	51	Duruaku
12	Durunta	32	Duruije	52	Duruanyanwu
13	Duruewuru	33	Duruozuruigbo	53	Duruonwumere
14	Durunnaka	34	Duruiheoma	54	Duruoji
15	Duruchinyere/Duruchi	35	Durueburuo	55	Duruogbuagu
16	Durukwu	36	Duruobichiri	56	Durueke
17	Umuduruochokwu	37	Umuduruesika	57	Umuduru
18	Umudurunwaneri	38	Umuduruoyiriagha		
19	Ikeduru	39	Umuduruonara		

From the study, the linguistic relation between the title “Duru” and the phrase “Di Uru” is made manifest with a cross linguistic comparison with other names that exhibit the same structural and semantic dispositions. A cross referral insight could be drawn from other Igbo names bearing similar morphological prefixes of the synonym “Di” as shown below:

- | | | |
|-----------|------------------|-------------------------|
| a. Diji | lord of yam | a successful yam farmer |
| b. Dimgba | lord of the ring | an undefeated wrestler |

c. Diochi	lord of palm wine	a successful palm wine tapper
d. Dike	lord of strength	a warrior
e. Diogu	lord of war	an accomplished warrior
f. Dioka	lord of maize	an accomplished maize farmer
g. Dinta	lord of hunting	a successful hunter
h. Diokauzu	lord of blacksmithing	a successful blacksmithing

“Di” in the above names signifies lordship, excellence and mastery in the art, activity or profession associated with the respective nominals. For instance, “Diji” in example (a) is name given to a great/excellent yam farmer. “Dimgba” in example (b) is an honorary name given to a great/excellent/undefeated wrestler. “Diochi” in example (c) is also an honorary title name given to a great/excellent and accomplished palm wine tapper. “Dike” in example (d) is a title signifying greatness and excellence in strength. “Diogu” in example (e) is a title given to a great and accomplished fighter/warrior.

By implication of the explanation above, one will discover that the meaning of “Di uru” overtly expresses as “Duru” follows the same order of analysis which by implication semantically expresses the following a: master of gains, lord of excellence, lord of significance, great and excellent merchant. These can be seen from the following examples: (a) Duruji, (b) Duruoba, (c) Durunta, (d) Duruogbuagu, (e) Duruoshimili, and (f) Duruagwu.

The bearer of these title names are easily influenced by such names as the name portrays what they have achieved, their ideology, expectation and good will. A name such as Duruji according to one Maazi Ojiako is given to a great yam farmer in recognition of his distinguished effort in farming. Another respondent (Mazi Ifediora) states that, “young yam farmers look unto someone like me for assistance and advice on anything related to farming”. According to him, one of the responsibilities of any one with the name, “Duruji” is to lend yam seedlings to some hardworking farmers who do not have enough yam to plant, however, the benefactor choses days to work for the Duruji in return.

Table 2: Comparison between Duru and Eze Related Names

	Duru	Eze		Duru	Eze
1	Duruobi	Ezeobi	15	Duruagwu	Ezeagwu
2	Durugo	Ezeugo	16	Duruchinyere	Ezechinyere

There is close relationship between duru and eze as revealed from this study. The two terms are obviously used in reference to great people of their time (often male). There are two dimensions to the perception and interpretation of the concept of eze: (i) Eze in relation to rulership (political), and (ii) Eze in relation to lordship (mastery). Eze in relation to rulership (political) is understood to be a traditional ruler or a king of a particular community, town or a kingdom that obviously share certain cultural beliefs in common. For example: Eze Umuchima (the king/ruler of Umuchima Town), Eze Ideato (the king/ruler of Ideato Community), Eze Obosi (the king/ruler of Obosi Town), Eze Owerri (the king/ruler of Owerri town), and Eze Igboikwu (the king/ruler of Igboikwu kingdom). Eze in relation to lordship is perceived to be a master or lord in a particular art, act or profession; for examples; farming, trade, war, wrestling, basket making, tailoring, etc. The lordship perception of Eze is a conferment and honorary title bestowed on individuals who has demonstrated mastery, greatness and excellence in their chosen profession and other communal responsibilities.

By semantic implication, “Duru” is obviously related to the later perception of “Eze” as explained above. By the virtue of this semantic relativity, “Duru” and “Eze” are said to be mutually exclusive, as there are indications that in Igbo communities where the title “Duru” is predominant, “Eze” is scarcely taken as name as gathered from the field study. A morpho-semantic insight of the names shows that wherever “Duru” occurs during naming, “Eze” can as well occupy the same structural position as seen from the Table below.

3	Durueke	Ezeke	17	Duruno	Ezeuno
4	Duruemeruo	Ezemeruo	18	Duruiheako	Ezeiheako
5	Duruije	Ezeije	19	Duruanyanwu	Duruanyanwu
6	Duruonwumere	Ezeonwumere	20	Durunta	Ezenta
7	Duruwuru	Ezewuru	21	Duruozuruigbo	Ezeozuruigbo
8	Duruogbuagu	Ezeogbuagu	22	Duruiheoma	Ezeiheoma
9	Duruji	Ezeji	23	Duruoha	Ezeoha
10	Duruoshimili	Ezeoshimili	24	Duruaku	Ezeaku
11	Duruoba	Ezeoba	25	Durunwa	Ezenwa
12	Duruibe	Ezeibe	26	Duruigbo	Ezeigbo
13	Durunaka	Ezennaka	27	Durujiaku	Ezejiaku
14	Duruebube	Ezebube	28	Duruoji	Ezeoji

Duru Names Associated with Wealth/Life Achievements

People acquire new names appellations based on their personal achievements. As stated earlier, duru signifies lordship, excellence and mastery in the art, activity or profession associated with the respective nominals. For example, Duruogbuagu (Duru the killer of lion) is a name which can be associated with physical strength showing what the bearer has achieved in life (killing of lion). This kind of name is used as a kind of identification for whom the bearer grows to be (brave and fearless and very skilful in hunting) and that is why such a person prefers this kind of name to the names given to him by his parents at infancy according to one of our respondents, *Maazi Nnagoziri*. The study reveals that in some cases, Duru is used to show wealth or extent of achievement in life. For example, a name like Duruji (Ogbuji) is usually given to a man as a title when he has so many barns of yam. According to one of our respondents (Duruiheako), he prefers his title name (Duruiheako) more than his other names (Chidiebele and John) because he worked so hard to achieve the name and still working to maintain it. Any bearer of names such as Duruaku, just like Ezeaku (king of wealth) should be well known for his wealth, and might have used his wealth to impact positively to the people and the community. Also, Duruoshimili is taken by a man who the community members see as being very wealthy and generous, selfless, and a pillar of the community. Duru in itself signifies wealth, while *Oshimili* (river) symbolises continuity, unending, surplus and generosity.

Duru name is context-dependent. A single

name can have different possible meanings when embodied in different circumstances of name giving. This could further express that the exact meaning of one's name can only be found in the minds of the name-givers/bearers and the context or motivation for naming. For example Duruokanumee states that he was given the name for his contribution to his community. Another Duruokanumee during phone interview states that he does not have much money when the title was given to him, but he was always available whenever his people need him. According to him, "title is not always based on money but also on character, selfless service and generosity". He states further that one can be generous with his/her time noticeably by everyone and the act can as well be rewarded.

Place Name Associated with Duru

There are personal names that point to the place of living. The place names as gathered from the study were names of people that settled in various places earlier and later the names turned to the place names. The following are some of the existing place names:

Table 3: Place Names Associated with Duru

1	Ikeduru	5	Umuduruonara
2	Umuduru	6	Umuduruoyiriagha
3	Umuduruesika	7	Umudurunwaneri
4	Umuduruochokwu	8	Umuduruihuoma

According to one of our respondents, Ikeduru was a warrior and defender of his people. Where he

occupied was later named Umuikeduru but “umu” was with time get deleted. The study reveals that names associated with duru are exclusively for male. The study reveals that “duru is not for woman no matter how skilful or wealthy a woman becomes. The study also reveals that names associated with duru are not given at infant but among the names one can take at adulthood, portraying the person’s achievement, ideology, desire, generosity, etc.

Conclusion

Every human society has certain general framework of principles, values and norms or precepts with which people are categorized and placed in the moral scheme of things. It is on such templates that individual’s actions, status, ability and achievements are rewarded. There are certain acts, rituals and rites peculiar to communities which are performed by and for the people. Title taking remains culturally important among the Igbo and can only be conferred on highly regarded individuals who have contributed immensely to the community. Igbo take title as a means to seek status, power or influence. According to Ukpokolo (2009:3), chieftaincy title is viewed as forms of identity creation, which includes the enhancement

of self-esteem and self-worth for the conferred, but also as form which relates the conferred with the realities of their socio-cultural and economic environment. Igbo people attach much importance to names and naming practices. The knowledge about Igbo names gives insight into Igbo philosophy, thought, environment, religion, language and culture.

Though there are different versions to the name, “Duru”, one thing which is not under any dispute is that Duru is perceived as a wealthy son, who uses his wealth and material resources to positively affect the life of his people. The titles are given to hardworking and respectable men who has distinguished themselves from others regardless whether he is free-born or an outcaste.

Lastly, people are motivated to work hard and achieve success in whatever they do. One of the motivators of hard work is honouring the deserved with a title. the honoured work even harder to maintain the title name leading to saying that *E too dike na nke o mere, o mechie ozo* (If a great person is praised for his or her achievement, he or she would achieve more).

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