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## Socio-pragmatic Aspects of the Kurya Nicknames against First Names Given after Birth

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### Abstract

This study investigated the socio-pragmatic aspects of nicknames in Kurya, a Bantu language spoken in northwestern Tanzania. The study was motivated by the fact that the available literature on personal names does not offer adequate information about what determines the selection of a Nicknames assigned to a person in the Kurya community and whether nicknames are semantically related to the personal names given after birth. The study employed a qualitative approach and a case study design. Its data were collected through interviews and critical documentary analysis whereby a total of six Kurya nicknames were obtained. The data were then analysed on the basis of Cognitive Semantics Theory and construal principles in particular. The findings indicated that *Kidanga, Isokhero, Engoko, Iriraghiri, Esalighoko, Irongo, Bhulanya, Etena, Inchupa, Inchughu, Amaghuha, and Kerabhoko* are Kurya nicknames whose assignment was influenced by behaviour, color, structure or articulation. It was noted that most of the Kurya nicknames do not have any symbiotic relationship with their bearers' first names given after birth; the few which appear to be in a semantic relationship with first names come just by chance. Based on the findings, the study concludes that nicknames have a very important role in any community since they reflect the construal cognition of human nature and nurture. So, communities are advised to value their personal names even though nicknames have taken over. This is because personal names are our official identities and are the ones that are supposed to appear in official documents such as identity cards unless it is stated otherwise.

**Keywords:** Kurya; Nicknames; cognitive semantics

### 1. Introduction

Personal names have attracted the attention of sociolinguists worldwide for many years as encoded in Ullmann, 1962; Chucks-Orji, (1972); Mensah & Offong, (2013); Lusekelo, 2015; Asheli, 2017; Crystal, 1997; Rubanza, 2000 to mention just but a few. This is due to their problematic nature since their meanings may be associated with objects or things or nothing at all. A name is a word or phrase that identifies a specific person, place or thing (Crystal, 1997:112). If this definition is true, does a name literally reflect the attributes of the person or place or object that it is designated to represent? Is this the reason many linguists have set themselves in a quest for an explanation as to why some names are meaningful while others are not? The current study does not seek to provide answers to these questions and others raised in the prevailing debate on nicknames. Rather, it seeks to arrive at an understanding of the connection (if any) between the nicknames and the personal names assigned to individuals after birth in the Kurya community of Tanzania. Therefore, this would provide wide understanding between personal names and the nicknames

The issue of personal names and their meanings is not simple to discuss as it may be thought, unlike issues related with other aspects of linguistics such as phonetics, phonology, morphology and syntax. As such, semanticists are yet to arrive at a common stance regarding whether personal names are meaningful or meaningless. This is what lies at the core of the discussion of Kurya nicknames in the present study.

But what exactly is a name? In the view of Crystal (1997), a name is a word or phrase that identifies a specific person, place or thing. Based on this definition, a name is a word that specifies a particular referent, which may be a person, object or physical place. In that sense, personal names specify the human who bears those names they represent Olatunji *et al.*, 2015). According to Olatunji and his colleagues, personal names have one very intriguing attribute in common: i.e., they are universal in the sense that every human bears a name. While this is true, names are particularistic too since their forms and patterns vary from society to society. Thus, it can be said that the forms and patterns of particularism draw attention for the current analysis with reference to Kurya personal names.

The issue of personal names falls under a discipline of linguistics called *onomastics*, which deals with personal and place names. As a discipline, onomastics is divided into two branches namely: Anthroponomastics and toponomastics. The first is anthroponymy, which deals with personal names and the other is toponymy which deals with place names also known as toponymy. The motivation behind the current study lies in the fact that no study on the relationship between personal names and nicknames has focused on this topic in the Kurya language spoken in Tanzania. It can be generally concluded that the exposition of the present study will make tangible awareness on the factors triggering personal and nick names in the world.

## 2. Literature Review

Lusekelo (2015) did a study on personal names in Hadzabe. Based on his findings, personal names are meaningful because they bear important cultural information whose reading provides direct understanding of the central substances of cultures. He argues that African personal names are not empty vessels as they carry cultural information. Lusekelo's argument is based on the fact that African names carry meanings associated with cultural experiences in a particular community. The author reports that in Hadzabe, there are names that are meaningful and others that are not meaningful or whose meanings are difficult to trace. From this base, it seems that the author did not trace the names whose meaning (he claim) are meaningless, it must be noted that every name has meaning within the scope of cognitive science, thus despite Lusekelo's study is tangible, it would be more of great value if all meaningless name were traced. While Lusekelo dealt with people's given personal names, the current study is aimed at finding out if there is any correlation in meaning between the personal names given to individuals after birth and their nicknames in the Kurya community of Tanzania.

Asheli (2017) conducted a study on personal names in Kurya, Iraqw and Maa (Masai) languages, all spoken in Tanzania. His study was somewhat unique as it addressed the topic of personal names in three different languages that belong to different language families, his aim being to compare name patterns across language families as Kuria belongs to the Niger-Congo family, Maasai belongs to the Nilo-Saharan family and Iraqw belongs to the Afro-Asiatic family. Asheli concluded that naming in all these languages is principled. He found the phenomenon more principled among the Maasai compared to the way it is among the Iraqw and Kurya. For example, he revealed that most of the Maasai names are associated with wishes of success to their bearers, something a bit different from the two languages. In Kuria, names referring to the circumstances surrounding the birth of the bearers are dominant. The same was found true among the Iraqw speakers. Common in all the three communities was a belief that names determine the bearers' destinies. With such findings, Asheli established that names in African societies have meaning. Asheli went even further arguing that African names are more meaningful compared to the Western ones. Asheli's investigation on Kurya names had weaknesses as it did not exhaust much on other factors rather than looking at names associated with contexts of birth. Thus, the current study takes over from Asheli's analysis by looking at both given names and nicknames that individuals are assigned after birth and analyzing them under the principles of Cognitive Semantics.

Rubanza (2000) investigated personal names in Oruhaya language of Tanzania; He took side with the group of scholars who hold that personal names are meaningful. To him, the meanings of names have to do with the circumstances surrounding someone's birth, family continuity, family friction and conflicts found in the community. Some Haya examples including the following: *Byarugaba* (God's blessings), *Rwekaza* (who fights oneself), and *Kajuna* (helper) are

used by the scholar. These names carry information that points back to the grounds upon which they were selected. Insights from Rubanza's study are very relevant for the current study as they show what personal names imply. In a different way, Rubanza's study had minor weakness because it could be appealing if it could have exhausted the original meaning behind the Oruhaya names he discussed, for example the person named *Kajuna* 'helper' has no behavior of helping, this shows that the author would have traced back to show us that probably *Kajuna* inherited this name from the personal whose behavior is helping.

Ullmann (1962) argues that meaning should be defined on the basis of referential theories (theories that postulate that meaning lies in what a name points to Objects, properties and activities) and not in operational (contextual theories of meaning). The former deals with context-free language, while the latter deals with meaning in relation to context. Thus, according to Ullmann, semantics should deal with meaning in language and not in speech. This sounds to be the reason why the author considers personal names as meaningless items that serve as mere identification marks. Ullmann's argument is not complete because it does not reflect reality as his claim seems incomplete, this follows the fact that context and meaning most times are reciprocal in cognitive linguistics and sciences, the meaning of the name reflects people's schemata (experience), thus if that is true, names cannot be meaningless unless otherwise treated in a literal sense. To make this clear, the matter would require using different theories and harvesting more data from different sources in order to arrive at genuine explanations. For that matter, while Ullmann emphasizes using referential theory (context free language), the current study uses Cognitive semantics which defines meaning in the context of use rather than objective or fixed characteristics as argued in the referential approach.

Abubakari (2020) studied personal names in the Kusaal language spoken in Ghana. He revealed socio-cultural and religious beliefs and practices of the Kusaal as the motives behind the selection of personal names in that community. He found that personal names in Kusaal have semantic content, thus constituting a set of linguistic forms that are meaningful contrary to the claim that they are devoid of sense (Kripke, 1980). He proved his argument by using day-names, family names, nicknames, and shrine names to mention but a few. According to him, the name given to a child in the Kusaal community is expected to have a great impact on the bearer in either negative or positive terms. In that community, parents have to give their child a good name if they want a promising future for him/her. Agyekum (2006) argues that the Kusaal community, like other African communities, has similar customary practices in naming newborns. They select names by considering the circumstances surrounding the birth of the child. Thus, in Kusaal, names have a direct relationship with the cultural beliefs (Sociocultural function) of individuals as well as the events surrounding the births of the bearers. The study by Abubakari is ironic in the sense that it has not been that way in the context that names reflect the bearers' behavior, the same phenomenon is traced from Kusaal community in which there are people whose names reflect peace but are wrong doers, other names reflect richness but their bearers are ultimately poor. We think probably what is presented would have been coded with care for quenching the satisfaction of research science and not just minds people. Therefore, the present study attempts to find out whether the personal names given after birth have the same semantic and pragmatic correlations among the Kurya of Tanzania.

Chucks-Orji (1972) speculates that the belief system of Africans is normally anchored on names given to persons, which determine their personhood and characteristics. This is in agreement with the argument that personal names are related to the core values of people's cultures as they show solidarity, social cohesion, and history, to mention just a few. In other words, the African naming

system is different from that of the Western cultures in which fashion is the basis of name selection. Therefore, making a comparison between the African nicknames and the given names in terms of meaning provides a new focus for the current study. The author's study cannot be ignored since it has made us understand concepts of Western and African names and the conception of meanings. In the scope of research science, names are identities, while this is true their meanings are in situ rather than appearance. Thus, Chucks-Orji (1972)'s study has elements of weakness because the value of names are mostly dissimilar from the value of the bearers, to put it clear, saying that personal names are related to the core values of people's cultures as they show solidarity, social cohesion, and history is untrue claim is the surface structure. It can be concluded that the current study investigates on the matter of fact if personal names juxtaposed with the given names are two things different.

Mensah & Offong (2013) reports that in the Effik community, children are named after the days of the week, time of birth or circumstances surrounding their births. The same practice is true of the Basà community of Nigeria where personal names reflect significant socio-cultural values, hence playing a part in the preservation of cultural heritage. These scholars take side with Semanticists who argue that personal names have meaning because they reflect the reality of cultural phenomena in the community where the name bearers live. An interesting question one may ask is: are these names real in relation to the abstracted history, events, activities or socio-cultural operations? Are the given personal names and nicknames related to the cultural practices of human beings? The weakness of these authors is that they did not answer these questions, thus making their work not comprehensive. Therefore, these questions will be answered in the current analysis using the Cognitive Grammar Theory.

In his study on 'doing gender', Lusekelo (2022) reflected in the first-Names of Persons in Nyamwezi and Sukuma, Lusekelo (2022) emphasizes that in some African societies the doing gender is entrenched in cultural activities which are highly cherished. That is to say, names are used as designation for males and females. Lusekelo found that the designation of *-ka-* is for feminine as opposed to *-ma-* for the male gender. These designations are meaningful since they have an entailment of status — the former being for low status (women) and the latter for high status (men) (Lusekelo, 2020:13). Lusekelo's analysis is very relevant to the current study because it helps to see how some naming systems work in other languages.

However, Lusekelo's study contains some sorts of weakness following the fact that the designation of *-ka-* for feminine and *-ma-* for the male gender is questionable to the best of my knowledge (out of personal feelings). These designations can apply either of the two genders as in Kachwele (male), Kadogo (either male or female), Kandi (female), Malya (male), Malima (male), Mashuda (female), Madukwa (male), Malendi (female), Mageni (female) Malulu (male), Maaàlwa (female) to mention but a few. With this regard, generalization that has been opted by the author attracts wrong assumptions pertinent to personal names. On top of that, his study differs from the current one in that he used Gender Construction Theory to analyse the different naming systems for men and females but the current study makes use of Cognitive Semantic Principles that govern the name givers in choosing the names they want. Thus, this may construe different data explanations.

### 3. Theoretical Underpinning

The study used Cognitive Semantics as part of the Cognitive linguistics disciplines (Evans, 2007). Cognitive Linguistics is said to

have been propounded by the works of Lakoff, and Langacker Talmy in the 1970s and 1980s. To be specific, Cognitive Semantics is the area of study concerned with a search for relationships between experiences, conceptual systems as well as semantic structures of language. More specifically, Cognitive semantics as a sub-discipline of Cognitive linguistics shows the way language knowledge reflects meaning. In other words, the approach focuses on conceptual structure and the external world experiences. Human beings use language in reflective ways. For that matter, meaning is in the mind of which the language is the reflector of what is in the mind. With this regard, personal names are derived from human experiences (events) depending on how they are interpreted in the cognitive mind or system.

It must be noted that language is for conceptualization, thus Cognitive Linguistics and Cognitive semantics in particular stand for conceptualizations following the fact that meaning is operational. This is based on Croft and Cruse' (2004) postulation of construal operations or principles of language in use. Construal Principles are the operations that determine the meaning of personal names (Croft & Cruse, 2004). The main assumption of construal principles is that meaning is a conceptualization such as salience, metonym, and principle of compositionality, metaphoricity, iconicity and folk theory (Cf, Langacker, 2000; Taylor, 2002; Rosch, 1978).

The cognitive semantics theory and strict compositionality in particular possesses weakness following its argument that there is no 'surplus' meaning accruing to a complex expression that is not attributable to its parts or the manner of their combination. In other words, the way in which simpler units combine to form complex expressions also makes a fixed and determinate contribution to the meaning of a complex expression (Chabata, 2007). This assumption cannot handle the current study; the theory could have been flexible as in relaxation principle other than strict composition, thus for usefulness of the theory other sub tenets as in metaphor, metonym, icon and folk theory captures explanations. The Cognitive Semantics as part of the Cognitive linguistics disciplines had practical application to the current study following the fact that Kurya Nick names contain core and peripheral semantics which is the major principle of Cognitive sciences in linguistics disciplines.

### 4. Data Collection Methods

This study employed a qualitative research approach (Gray, 2014, Strauss & Corbin, 2008). The qualitative research approach was preferred because of the nature of the phenomenon under investigation. Thus, the reason for using a qualitative approach was that only descriptions, interpretations and explanations of the data on Kurya personal and nicknames were being sought. The phenomenon was described in the form of words during data analysis and discussion. In terms of design, a case study design was used, where Kurya given names and nicknames served as the cases. The design was chosen because it has the advantage of allowing the researcher to gather data from a natural setting and let them guide the findings. In other words, the findings of case studies have close affinity with reality since the data are collected in natural settings, i.e. case studies speak for themselves. Therefore it can be said that no any statistical presentation other than descriptions of words the study envisioned

The study population was composed of the Kurya people. The term study population means a complete set of individuals, cases or objects with some common observable characteristics (Cf. Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003; Tromp & Kombo, 2006:76; Enon, 1998:13). The researcher used Kurya individuals who were native speakers of Kurya language. Purposive sampling was used to select six Kurya native speakers; three males and three females. Specifically, they were selected by using a snowball sampling technique. The selected

Kurya native speakers were aged 25-65 years. Data translation and interpretation was done with the help of a Kurya native undergraduate student whose place of domicile and place of birth are in Mara region where the data were obtained. Therefore, the Kurya population from which six informants were selected provided tangible data on Kurya Nicknames.

In this study, two data collection techniques were used: critical documentary analysis, online interviews with three Kurya natives and face-to-face interview with three Kurya native informants, Patton (1990) observes that a combination of different methods provide cross-data validity checks and therefore reduces errors that can occur when one particular method is used. The article achieved reliability through interviews and face-to-face interviews with a total of 6 Kurya native speakers whose domicile and birth places are in the Mara region. As they had experience with the environment, their

responses regarding nicknames and their meanings were consistent and similar to what takes place in their context. The behavior and preferences in the selection of nicknames were examined using a prompt interview guide. The same guide was used to examine the structure and morphology of the nicknames. With this regard, the interview yielded good explanations compared to other instruments, though all instruments contributed to full understanding of Kurya Nicknames.

#### 4.0 Findings and discussion

This subsection discusses the findings on Kurya nicknames and the factors that determine the selection of a nickname to be assigned to a person in the Kurya community. The following table presents the first names and nicknames which were collected and analyzed in this study.

**Table 1:** First and Kurya nicknames

First Name	Meaning	Factors	Nick Name	Meaning	Factors	Relations
Ghitongho		Morphology	Kidanga		Behavior	X
Mgaya	From Rorya	Etymology	Isokhero	Thief	Behaviour	X
Agnes	Pure or holy	Religion	Bhalisema	Speak	Articulation	X
Thomas	Twin	Religion	Inchugu	Elephant	Morphology	X
Waigana	Stone/shilling	Habits	Esalighoko	Cock	Assimilation	√
Rhobi	Fallen	Consecutive	Engoko	Hen	Behaviour	X
Marwa	Alcohol	Behaviour	Iriraghi	Much eating	Behavior	√
Wambura	Rain	Rainfall	Etena	Modern cows	Activity	X
Makoro	Old/elder	Ancient	Kerabhoko	Dry skin	Skin vision	X
Sighirya	Conflict maker	Behaviour	Bhulunya	Blanket	Cloth	X
Chacha	Coming		Musurimrito	Heavy soup	Habits	X
Oporo	Support		Omoghoghi	Butcher	Activity	X

Source: Fieldwork (2024)

Table 1 presents nicknames and the first names of Kurya people. The first names are the ones that people are assigned after birth and the nicknames are those which they are assigned due to their behavioral characteristics. The table shows that most of the Nicknames have no semantic relationship with the first names assigned after birth. The fewer nicknames that happen to bear such a relationship with the corresponding first names are just by chance. It was found the nicknames are currently used more than the real names/first names/, this means that the first names have been ignored as the nicknames have taken over. This is consistent with Cognitive Semantics which postulates that the second construal sense tends to be more in practice compared to the basic sense. Thus, language is understood as "a set of resources that are available to language users for symbolization (semantic structure) of thought and for the communication of these symbolizations" (Taylor, 2002:30). Additionally, the process of acquiring meaning is about building up this repertoire of resources through actual encounters with usage events. That is why the nicknames are used more frequently than the first names. Under the level of presentation, a large percent of Nick names have no connection with first names, though despite differences between first and the nicknames, names are identities in our daily communicative facts other than meanings they represent. The following are some Kurya Nicknames and their explanations:

**KIDANG'A:** This is a Kurya Nickname that was assigned to a person whose original or first name was *Ghitogho* to mean 'small' or 'little'. To put it in a different way is that *Ghitogho* is a Kurya personal name given to an individual whose body structure is thinner or smaller than others. However, the word *Kidang'a* as a Nickname for *Ghitogho* denotes the original brews cooked there by the Kurya, *Ghitogho* was given this name because he drank too much of this alcohol to the point of being so named. Here the drinking habit of the individual is what made his fellow community members assign him this nickname, and when this person is called, he appears very happy. This name is reciprocally envisioned within the Silence

Principle of Cognitive Semantics, as Lakoff (1987) argues that people use familiar, memorable or otherwise silent examples in choosing a name to assign to someone. Thus, *Kidang'a* was given this name because it attracts people's attention unlike the first given name *Ghitogho*. This is opposed to Schmidt and Fayad's (1997) argument regarding the relationship between nicknames and the factors for naming systems, the author argues that things or objects are used in the operation of naming because they appear to stand for what they love or act upon.

**ISOKHERO:** Literary *Isokhero* means 'theft'. This is another Kurya Nickname from Mara region of Tanzania which was given to a person known as *Mgaya* literally means 'a person whose place of domicile is *Rorya* district of Mara region. Any person from *Rorya* was known as *Magaya* (singular) or *Wagaya* (plural). However, *Mgaya* was a chronic stealer of goats in *Rung'abure* Village. So, whenever any incident of theft occurred, all people in the village suspected him of being responsible for the crime. As a result, he was given the name *Isokhero*. Thus, the nickname came from his stealing behaviour. This agrees with Cognitive Semantics Theory under which it is assumed that the meaning will be conveyed and interpreted depending on the context. Such a tendency is consistent with Langacker's claim that:

Rather than ensuring explicitness, generatively has had the unfortunate effect of impoverishing the natural domain of linguistic enquiry, leading to maximal inexplicitness (i.e. silence) concerning fundamental matters (Langacker (1998:64). Based on the above quotation, it is to be borne in mind that linguistic structure carries figurative sense depending on the context in which linguistic expressions are made.

**BHALISEMA:** 'In English, the word "Bhalisema" means "to speak" or "to say." This was the Nickname assigned to a person known as 'Agnes'. It was discovered that Agnes, a native of

Burundi, struggled to pronounce this word correctly. Instead of saying "sema," meaning 'speak' she pronounced it as "Bhalisema." However, people were very happy to hear Agnes pronouncing the word "Bhalisema" and thus they started to call her Bhalisema. It must be noted that the meaning of the first name *Agnes* is 'pure' or 'Holy', thus there is no symbiotic relationship between the first name *Agnes* and the Nickname given after birth. By the time of data collection, she is no longer called Agnes because the Nickname Bhalisema had taken over and all people knew her as Bhalisema. Therefore, the nickname emanated from her poor articulation. By the time data was collected, Agnes had become universally known as Bhalisema due to her poor articulation, leading to a shift away from her original name. This nickname emerged from her difficulty in pronunciation. According to cognitive semantics, articulation, which is linked to phonology as Taylor (2002:20) suggests, played a significant role in this renaming process.'

**ESALIGHOKO:** The literal meaning of the Kurya word "Esalighoko" is cock. This was a Nickname assigned to a person known as *Waigana* which meant 'stone or shilling'. Thus, Waigana was given the Nickname *Esalighoko* because of the habit of taking food every time in the morning, thus he was likened to a cockroach that wields every day and hence he was nicknamed "esalighoko". The system of naming is embedded within Cognitive Semantics such that when a communicative need in a particular context is envisioned, the speaker has the task of coding an appropriate linguistic expression for his conceptualization (Cf. Langacker (1987:65).

**IRIRAGHIRI:** The meaning of the word "*Iriraghiri*" in English is to 'love eating' i.e. to eat a lot of food. This is a Nickname that was assigned to a Kurya person whose first name was known as 'Marwa' which means 'alcohol'. Marwa was given this name because of her eating habits since even when she visited new places she asked for food and if it was not there she would wait for it to be cooked. She was dubbed "*Iriraghiri*" and all people in the village of Rung'abure knew her by this Nickname. Under the level of assessment it can be said that Marwa as the first name does not reflect the meaning of Nickname "*Iriraghiri*".

**OMOGHOGHI:** The word *Omoghoghi* means a butcher in Kurya language, i.e. a person who has butchery. The nickname was given to Oporo, a very famous butcher who had made slaughtering a staple and earned trust because of the good quality of his service. Note that 'Oporo' implies 'support', this is traced from stiffening or reinforcing or supporting wood, metal etc. This shows Oporo does not mean butcher, the meaning that was assigned this name because of his job of slaughtering cows at the butchery. The man loved the name for this activity which made him even more famous and put him in a better position to earn money when he was called because of the slaughtering task. Metaphorically contextualized, the Kurya people embed meaning through conceptualization by applying meanings beyond the primary interpretation of a term.' This is consistent with Lakoff's (1987:583) argument that the "primary function of language is to convey meaning, thus, grammar should show as directly as possible how parameters of form are linked to parameters of meaning". 'Heine (1997:3) argues that when using language, people prioritize encoding meanings effectively over concerns about syntax or phonology, highlighting the centrality of meaning.'

**MUSURIMRITO:** The Kurya word *Musurimrito* means heavy soup. This name was assigned to someone called *Chacha* as his nickname. Note that the meaning of *Chacha* in the Kurya speech community implies 'coming' as in 'cows are coming'. *Chacha* used to go to some restaurants and order heavy soup sauce. Then, people started to call him *Musurimrito* and he was very happy with the name. This resonates with the fact that it is normal for a word to

acquire additional senses or bearers in a naming system. Here, *Mrito* means heavy and *Musuri* means soup sauce. Thus, *Musurimrito* is an adjectival lexeme that has acquired another sense that is related to its basic sense. As Goldberg (1995:33) observes, in a situation where a lexical unit has become polysemous, there is a central or basic sense of that lexical unit, from which figurative or specialized senses are developed, i.e. figurative senses are configured from the basic sense in a naming system.

**ETENA:** The lexeme *Etena* means "modern cows". This was a Kurya nickname which was assigned to a person known as *Wambura* which means 'rain'. *Wambura* was a person who was a famous keeper of modern cattle in the village, had named himself the cow or *Etena*. The villagers used to call him *Etena* rather than *Wambura*. In other words, Mr. *Wambura*'s occupation made his fellow villagers find a reason to call him so. From the theoretical point of view, the prototype model of cognitive semantics is manifested as "a mental representation of a typical instance of a category such that entities get assimilated to the category based on its perceived similarity with the prototype (Cf. Taylor, 2014). Therefore, the name *Etena* is symbiotically related to a phenomenon that has some kind of relationship or similarity with a door.

**KERABHOKO:** Is the Kurya nickname which was possessed by somebody called *Mokoro*. The Kurya personal name *Mokoro* means 'elder or very old person'. For that matter, the word *Kerabhoko* means "a person whose skin is dry or not soft. *Mokoro* was given this as his nickname in the village as his skin looked dry even when he had not done any work. Here, the nature or domain of configuration of the Kurya people's experiences is behind the assignment of this nickname to *Mokoro*. In accordance with cognitive semantics, Taylor (2002) points out that the domain or base influences knowledge configuration which provides the context for the conceptualization of a semantic unit. Thus, in the lens of this point of view, it is the dry nature of *Mokoro*'s skin which serves as the point of reference in assigning him the nickname.

**BHULENYA:** The word "*Bhuleny*a" translates to "Blanket." Thus *Bhuleny*a was a nickname possessed by a person known as *Sighirya*, *Sighirya* is a Kurya personal name which implies conflict maker, basing of the context *Sighirya* acquired this Nickname due to his habit of wandering around without clothes, wrapped only in a blanket. The allocation of this nickname aligns with Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) metaphorical domain mapping theory. This theory juxtaposes two domains: the concrete source domain, which can be directly experienced or perceived, and the abstract target domain, which relates to subjective experiences. In the case of *Sighirya*, the assignment of the nickname stemmed from the target domain, specifically referencing his daily behavior of walking around in a blanket.'

**INCHUGHU:** The word "*Inchughu*" in the English language means 'elephant', the largest animal on the earth. Thomas is a man who nicknamed himself *Inchughu* because of his body shape being so large to the point that he never imagined there was another man with a body like his. The people around started to call him *Inchughu* or *Waichughu* i.e. the largest elephant.

With regard to this name 'Thomas', there is also no symbiotic connection with the nickname following the fact that the meaning of the former is 'twin' while the latter is elephant. Theoretically, the nickname *Inchughu* and others reflect Iconicity theory which claims that meaning echoes some resemblance between the names and the referent (named). Geeraerts and Hubert (2012) argue that iconicity is nothing but the opposite of arbitrariness, thus there are cases in which a sign directly represents a referent. This is true of the Kurya nickname as *Inchughu* as it reflects its referent directly.

**ENGOKO:** The meaning of the word "Engoko" is Hen. This was the nickname assigned to a person known as Rhobi which means 'fallen' was given the name Engoko because of his habit of stealing his mother's chicken and selling them to earn money for alcohol. His mother gave him that nickname and people started calling him so. That way, the word Engoko became polysemous. In addition to its literal sense or basic, it has an additional sense related to the basic according to cognitive grammar theory (Taylor, 2003:102 and Goldberg, 1995:33). Therefore, the nickname resonates directly within the tenet described in the sense that what is referred to as Engoko is related to what is stolen

## 5. Conclusion

The central argument of the paper focused on an assessment of socio-pragmatic aspects of Kurya Nicknames against their counterparts (first names) meanings under the scope of cognitive semantics. In other words, the paper has analysed the relationship of nicknames with the first names given after birth. The study has evaluated factors that determine nicknames assigned to individuals in the Kurya speech community. In general speaking the study has established that *Kidanga, Isokhero, Bhalisema, Inchughhu, Esalighoko, Etena, Kerabhoko, Iriraghiri, Kerabhoko, Irongo, Bhulanya, and Amaghuha* are Kurya nicknames assigned to different individuals in the Kurya speech community of Tanzania. The assignment of these Kurya nicknames is based on behavior, activities, nature, structure and other socio-cultural factors. This is within the scope of semantic construal operations based on the assumption that meaning stands for conceptualization. That is why nicknames have less fixed senses, which reflect characteristics of their bearers. Hence, it is recommended that communities should value their first names because they are the ones that are officially recognized and can be used on documents such as national identity cards. They should not be ignored because of the dominance of nicknames, which has made some people start ignoring their first names, something that causes difficulties in tracing their origins.

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## Author's Biography



**CHIPANDA SIMON** was born in 1984 in Buligi Village, Senga ward, now part of the Geita region. He completed his primary education from 1994 to 2000 and proceeded to Bugando Secondary School for his O-level studies from 2001 to 2004. He then attended Bupandagila High School for his A-level education from 2005 to 2007. In 2007, he enrolled at the University of Dar es Salaam (MUCE), where he pursued a degree in Education with a major in Linguistics and a minor in History, graduating in 2010. In January 2011, Dr. Simon began his professional career as an educator at Lwanhima Secondary School in Mwanza City, Tanzania. Subsequently, in 2011, he commenced his Master's studies in Linguistics at St. Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT), completing his degree in 2013. In 2015, Dr. Simon embarked on his doctoral studies in Linguistics at the Open University of Tanzania, graduating in 2018. Following the completion of his PhD, he transitioned to the Mwalimu Nyerere Memorial Academy (MNMA), where he currently serves as a lecturer in the Department of Linguistics and Literatures. His teaching portfolio includes courses such as Semantics in Linguistics, English Morphology, English Phonology, English Variations, and Business Communication Skills. Dr. Simon has contributed significantly to his field with ten publications, primarily focusing on Bantu languages' Morphology, demonstrating his commitment to advancing linguistic scholarship.