

Creative Ways of Using Esl To Name Children

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Abstract: *The study examines English names which second language speakers give their children. The names may be English but have a distinct African flavour such as No Please and Talknomore hence the term Afro English. The study interrogates the background of over sixty names collected over a period of ten years. The researchers conclude that ESL speakers of all linguistic groups exercise creativity when they choose English names. Furthermore the study reveals that the less educated the parents are, the more creative they get to be in name choice.*

Key words: *Afro English, onomastics, ESL, SFL, indigenous and circumstances.*

I. Introduction

Background

The birth of a child is universally marked by congratulatory messages. Among the Ndebele and the Shona the occasion is marked by expressions of joy and goodwill; ‘Amhlophe’, and “Makorokoto” respectively. (The expression is loosely translated ‘congratulations.’) The naming of the newest member of the clan is not to be taken lightly and it is everybody’s business. When the extended family was still in evidence the grandparents, the parents and other relatives, played a leading role in the naming of the child. The presentation of a present could be accompanied by a name which best depicted ones conception of the event.

The name of the child could be drawn or be inspired by different factors. For example the child could be named in response to whatever the family would be going through at that point in time. This explains the prevalence of the name Freedom for children born when Zimbabwe attained independence in 1980 and the names Strife and Chaos for children born during times of war. Some names were inspired by topical events at the time of birth, while some were inspired by the aspirations and hopes that the parents. In Zimbabwe today, names are influenced by the mix of local languages as well as English. The present paper is grounded in onomastics, focusing on the influence of the English language in the naming practices of Second language speakers. The study focuses on Afro English names.

II. Review of related literature

The study of names is a broad area which has attracted local research focused from different perspectives. However, while a number of studies have been done on the naming practices of the Shona, Pongweni (1983), Mapara et al (2005 cited in Mutema and Njanji 2013) and Pfukwa (2003, 2007, 2008). These scholars focused on different aspects of the naming process and provided new insights into a phenomenon otherwise taken for granted, thus pointing out to other avenues that still need to be investigated.

Pfukwa (ibid) interrogated liberation (Chimurenga) war names, their origins and the purposes they served in conveniently concealing old identities and carving new ones expedient for the execution of the guerilla war. Mutema and Njanji (2013) on the other hand focused on names in everyday life; exploring how some novel names come to being and interrogating their purposes. Their study is however not conclusive since no study could conceivably cover all aspects of the naming process; hence the conception of the present study.

In this study situations in which names were derived from are examined. For example the circumstance of birth determined the bestowal of the name ‘Unseen’ shortened to ‘Seen’. The owner of the name states that her mother went back to her family to deliver her first child, a tradition common among both the Shona and the Ndebele. A few days before the baby was born the paternal grandmother passed away. The aunt who had little education then called the newly born ‘Unseen’ (by her grandmother of course). The owner of the name is a grandmother and none of her grandchildren have Afro-English names. The name ‘Unseen’ was given from a position of knowledge and understanding of the term. In another case, the name ‘Do it’, shortened ‘Do,’ could have been bestowed by a husband who considered his wife’s fertility, tardy in producing the heir.

Very little has been written on such names which are, in essence, African but are rendered in English. These have been referred to as ‘Afro-English’ names as used by Second Language speakers of English in Zimbabwe. This paper seeks to explore the phenomenon of Afro-English names that have been coined in different Zimbabwean communities at different times in post independent Zimbabwe. The ingenious use of