



Book Review

Personal Names and Naming from an Anthropological-Linguistic Perspective. EDITED BY SAMBULO NDOLOVU. Berlin: De Gruyter. 2023. Pp. 375. (E-book) \$130.99. ISBN 13: 978-3-11-075929-7.

This book offers numerous instances illustrating the extensive cross-linguistic range of anthroponyms, along with their distinct cultural attributes and connotations. It presents an interdisciplinary and cross-linguistic examination of personal names, an exploration that becomes meaningful solely when undertaken within the cultural framework from which they originate. Ethnopragmatics, in this context, pertains to analyzing speech practices based on internal cultural concepts—the collective values, norms, priorities, and assumptions of speakers—rather than assuming universal pragmatic principles.

The ethnopragmatics of names delves into their performative roles within specific cultural milieus. This book embraces the notion that names are intrinsic to speech acts, actively fulfilling distinctive cultural purposes. Consequently, the exploration in this book encapsulates the understanding that names are more than mere labels; they are integral components of linguistic acts that carry out specific cultural tasks. Personal names and naming practices intertwine with culture through ceremonies, traditions, and conventions. Names and naming are fundamental practical rituals of everyday life. They transcend language structure to signify social roles and structures. Names interface with all aspects of life, reflecting sex and gender, identity, status, and class, as well as kinship structures and history.

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Personal names also serve religious purposes, acting as communication bridges between individuals and deities. Research has established that names fulfill cultural and social roles such as conveying love and hatred, embodying colonial legacies, giving directions, appealing to the spiritual, and symbolizing power dynamics. In essence, names are integral to cultural practices and social interactions, and *Personal Names and Naming from an Anthropological-Linguistic Perspective* offers a comprehensive exploration of their multifaceted significance. The book features chapters from diverse cultures worldwide to showcase how names are intertwined with culture. Chapters span regions from South America (such as Brazil) and Africa (such as Nigeria and Ethiopia) to Europe (such as Lithuania), Asia (such as China), and Oceania (such as Tonga and Papua New Guinea). In total, the book encompasses eighteen chapters, including the introduction.

Section 1, Chapters 2 to 5, covers several specific cultures and their naming traditions. Chapter 2 focuses on the Hamar community in Ethiopia and reveals how their naming practices connect with their agropastoralist culture, particularly through livestock-centered addressing. Chapter 3 explores Papua New Guinea's Hinihon people and their powerful generational names. These names convey deep connections to land, while naming taboos and birth-ordinal names obscure identification. Chapter 4 examines Brazil's Paraná region and shows how surnames reflect history, migration, and social class. Linguistic traits of first names reveal insights into social influences on spelling. Chapter 5 explores youth nicknaming in Lithuania, especially its role in expressing social identity and cultural norms within the youth subculture. These chapters collectively reveal the intricate relationship between names and culture across diverse societies.

Section 2 explores how personal names undergo transitions across time, space, and societies, in ways that reflect political, social, physical, and temporal boundaries. In particular, this section, comprising Chapters 6 to 9, analyzes how names signify cultural shifts. Chapter 6 presents Israeli research on common versus unique names for newborns, tying name choices to human values like security, conformity, and openness to change. The findings reveal that parents who give unique names to their firstborn children often follow different naming patterns for subsequent children. Chapter 7 delves into naming practices in Madagascar, where the discussion focuses on the poetics and spiritual aspects of names. Speaking names aloud in orally oriented societies sustains poetic moments and prosaic audacity. The chapter also discusses derogatory names used to protect children from envious influences. Ethnopragmatic cultural transitions and rites of passage involving names are explored. Chapter 8 discusses naming strategies in Indigenous Australian communities, a discussion that reveals how language naming systems organize diversity and influence sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, and perceptions of identity and difference. Contrary to contemporary views, names in Indigenous Australia offer unique perspectives on understanding and valuing diversity. The final chapter in this section, Chapter 9, examines colonial transitions in eastern Zimbabwe through names. Focusing on white farmers' nicknames and their historical significance, it reveals how these names persist despite political changes. The nicknames express both colonial resentment and integration within communities.

Section 3 explores the spiritual aspects of names and naming. Chapters 10 to 13 examine the religious significance of personal names. Chapter 10 discusses how naming among the Bakonzo people in Uganda facilitates communication with spirits, particularly in cases of children born after a sibling's death. Chapter 11 delves into the Moso community in China and highlights the connections between Dongba and Daba spirits' names and Tibetan Buddhism, while uncovering linguistic assimilation and historical transitions. Chapter 12 explores the adoption of animal names as personal names among the Ibibio and Tiv people of Nigeria and thus emphasizes the influence of animals as religious totems and their impact on name choices. Chapter 13 focuses on the Basà people in Nigeria, where the examination focuses on how Basà personal names serve as a strategy for attempting to prevent infant mortality and linking the bearer with ancestors and deities. In short, this section sheds light on the profound significance of names within religious contexts.

Section 4 focuses on the linguistic analysis of personal names and their impact on socio-cultural factors. Chapters 14 to 18 explore name structures and meanings in cultural contexts. Chapter 14 investigates Turkic personal names in Azerbaijan, including naming traditions, principles, and interlinguistic influences. Chapter 15 explores the link between Saaroa personal names in Taiwan and cultural beliefs to showcase how name structures reflect cultural expressions. Chapter 16 delves into Tonga's Polynesian society and examines personal names and their ties to cultural context, including kinship and social stratification. Chapter 17 proposes a typology of Mazahuan personal names in Mexico to reveal cultural hybridities through modern naming practices. Chapter 18 dissects Ndebele personal names in Zimbabwe and thus illustrates how name morphology mirrors gender and cultural tendencies.

Personal Names and Naming from an Anthropological-Linguistic Perspective offers a comprehensive exploration of the intersection among names, language, and culture. Its strengths lie in its diverse range of chapters that cover various cultures and linguistic areas, which provide valuable insights into how personal names reflect and shape cultural realities. The interdisciplinary approach, integrating linguistics and anthropology, enriches the understanding of the intricate relationship between names and society. Moreover, the book sheds light on lesser-studied languages, promoting a more inclusive perspective on onomastics.

However, the book also exhibits some weaknesses. While the breadth of cultures covered is a strength, the limited depth of analysis in each chapter might hinder a more thorough understanding of specific naming practices. Additionally, the book's theoretical and methodological framework could be further elucidated to assist readers in navigating the complex subject matter. Furthermore, the book might benefit from more explicit connections between the chapters, highlighting overarching themes and facilitating a cohesive reading experience. This book offers a valuable exploration of its subject matter, but it could enhance its impact by providing deeper analyses within each chapter and clearer thematic connections across the book.

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