

Linguistic Approach to Ghotuo Anthroponyms

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Abstract: This study investigates Ghotuo anthroponyms from a linguistic perspective, highlighting names as a core element of identity that transcends mere labels. The Ghotuo language, an Edoid language spoken by the Otuo people (*emi Ghotuo*), is primarily located in northern Edo State, southern Nigeria. Adopting a socio-onomastic framework, which merges sociolinguistics and onomastics. The study analyses naming processes in Ghotuo and examines the impact of external influences on its naming system. Data were gathered through unstructured oral interviews and introspection, following a qualitative research methodology. The findings classify Ghotuo anthroponyms into six categories: simple names, compound names, desententialised names, theophoric names, metaphorical names, and names influenced by language contact. Additionally, the typology includes names associated with festivals or days of the week. The study also explores how geographical proximity to Yoruba-speaking communities, particularly in Ondo State, has shaped Ghotuo naming practices. By bridging a gap in the study of Ghotuo anthroponyms, this research enhances understanding of the cultural and linguistic dimensions of naming traditions.

Keywords: Anthroponyms, socio-onomastics, Language-Ghotuo, language contact

1. Introduction

Through the lens of linguistic anthropology, the study of anthroponyms reveals how language reflects cultural identity and societal norms, as noted by (Duranti 1997). Anthroponyms is the study of personal names. Alford (1988) describes anthroponyms as personal names that are symbolic markers of identity, reflecting familial ties, cultural heritage, and individual social roles. These names include personal names, surnames, and sometimes nicknames, and the heritage, or societal roles. In linguistics, studying anthroponyms helps us understand naming patterns and how they relate to social and cultural factors.

In every society, names are more than just labels. They carry stories, meanings, and traditions passed down from generation to generation. In a bustling Nigerian household, when a new born comes to life, after eight days the family gathers, the elders speak, and a name is given, one that will shape the child's identity for life, that name isn't chosen at random. It may tell of the family's dreams, their connection to the divine, or even the challenges surrounding the child's birth. Names hold within them the essence of culture, carrying the weight of beliefs, history, and societal norms throughout generations, within just a few syllables lies a world of endless possibilities, waiting to unfold into exciting future events. Names are like special labels for everything in the world and they play a big role in our lives. When a baby is born, the first special thing they get is their name, which helps them connect with the world around them. Naming is a universal practice that is used for the identification of individuals (Durant, 1997).

Naming is common to all the cultures of the world. All human societies give names to humans, animals, objects, places and landmark events. Naming acquires social importance and relevance because of its functions of identification and referencing Agyekum and Fasiku (2006). Names in Nigeria are not just identifiers but they carry deep cultural, religious and social significance. Across Nigeria, anthroponyms reveal much about the community's social structures, beliefs, and external influences. The study of anthroponyms in Nigerian communities allows an exploration of how language and culture intersect, and how naming practices reflect both internal traditions and external contact.

The Ghotuo language is an Edoid language Spoken by the Otuo people known as 'emi Ghotuo', who inhabit in the Northern Side of Edo state in Southern Nigeria. Ghotuo also known as Otuo, shares common boundaries with Okpe in Akoko-Edo Local Government Area to the North, to the East, Ikao, to the West, the Ose river that divides Edo State from Ondo State and to the South, Ake and Arokho respectively. The people of Ghotuo speak the Otuo dialect which was classified under Proto North Central Edoid by Elugbe (1989). The language is specifically spoken in Edo state. Below is the diagram of the Edoid language family tree showing the position of the Ghotuo language culled from Elugbe (1989). Ghotuo language being tagged a minority language in Edo state, much work has not being done on its naming system. Therefore, this study aims to explore and document the naming processes in Ghotuo using the anthropological approach.

The general aim of this study is to investigate the linguistic characteristics and cultural significance of anthroponyms within the Ghotuo speech community, focusing on naming processes, the anthropological implications of these names, and the effects of language contact on Ghotuo naming practices.

2. Theoretical studies

Ota (2002) studied Edo personal names, highlighting their cultural significance as reflections of the beliefs, ethics, and societal values of the Edo people. These names, far from being arbitrary, are deeply symbolic, often requiring divination before they are chosen. They represent a worldview where identity, destiny, and spirituality are interconnected. For instance, names like Ehimwenma ("My guardian spirit is good") reveal a belief in the guiding

influence of destiny. In Edo culture, Ota explain the Izomo naming ceremony as a pivotal event that takes place seven days after birth for healthy children and fourteen days for those who are sickly. This ceremony marks the transition of a child from the spirit world into human society. During the event, ancestral blessings are invoked, and the child is symbolically united with the universe and the community. Edo names can be broadly categorised based on their socio-cultural context. Names rooted in belief systems often affirm the concepts of destiny (Aisagbuanmwan: “Destiny is not determined on earth”) and reincarnation (Iyorre: “I have gone and come”). Others reflect the socio-political structure of the Edo Kingdom, honouring its rulers and hierarchy, as seen in names like Obasogie (“The King surpasses the ruler”). Kinship related names emphasise familial roles, such as the protective role of fathers (Erhabor: “The father protects”) or the high regard for children (Omosefe: “A child is more important than wealth”). Names also serve to promote ethics and values like bravery, hard work, and respect, with examples including Aigbedion (“One does not beat elders”). He also discussed how some names reflect the circumstances of a child’s birth, such as Ota (“Born in the evening”) or Idemudia (“I am stabilized”), which signify the socio-economic conditions at the time. Beyond their literal meanings, Edo names serve as powerful cultural tools, encapsulating family history, moral lessons, and traditional values. They are not just identifiers but carriers of communal memory and belief systems, passed down through generations. This study underscores the role of names as vital artifacts of Edo culture, preserving their worldview and connecting the past to the present. This study is related to the the present research as their focus is on Edo names while this present research is on linguistics approach to Ghotuo anthroponyms.

Ekpo (2013) explores the structure of Ibibio names, focusing on how personal names connected to traditional values and practices are viewed among the Ibibio people of southeastern Nigeria. The study identifies five main types of names used in the Ibibio community: lineage names, place names, nicknames, event names, and day names. It highlights that many names reflect the time of the child’s birth whether morning, evening, during a rainy day, on a specific day of the week, or a market day. The findings also show that certain names are believed to influence the character of the person who bears them. For example, the choice of a name can be influenced by various factors, such as when the child was born (time of day, day of the week, or during a specific event), the circumstances surrounding the birth (special incidents or challenges), or the family’s history (e.g., if the child resembles a sibling who passed away or if they are the firstborn). This study is relevant to the current research, as both examine the significance of names in their respective cultures. Ekpo’s work focuses on the structure of Ibibio names, the present study investigates a linguistic approach to Ghotuo anthroponyms.

Akinola (2014) investigates the communicative power of Yoruba names, focusing on their meanings, the messages they convey, and their influence in Yoruba society. The study uses a qualitative descriptive method, relying on observation and interviews to collect data. It explores the belief that Yoruba names are deeply connected to the values, virtues, and future of the individuals who bear them. According to Yoruba tradition, a name is not just an identifier but carries significant meaning, shaping the child’s behaviour and future. This is

captured in the Yoruba proverb “Oruko omo ni ro omo” (A child is influenced by his/her name). The findings reveal that Yoruba people believe a good name inspires individuals to live up to societal expectations and strive for positive aspirations. Akinola argues that giving meaningful indigenous names and preserving their significance can help reduce societal problems like theft, violence, and other vices, as children are motivated to uphold the virtues their names represent. The study also cautions against abandoning indigenous names or replacing them with anglicised versions in an attempt to follow modern trends, as this diminishes the cultural and communicative value of names. This research is related to the current study because both focus on names. Akinola’s work examines the process and meaning of Yoruba names, while the present study explores Ghotuo anthroponyms from a linguistic perspective.

Benjamin (2014,) investigate "Anthropolinguistic study of Àlà names in Igbo" examines the "À là" anthroponyms which according to him are names given to children at birth in honor of the earth goddess, Àlà. He noted that the Àlà names are no longer bore as forenames but are now used as surnames (family name/last name) by those who's fore-bearers had such names as their forenames. This is made worse with the advent of Christianity in Igbo land as parents have resorted to giving Christian names and other Igbo names that have no bearing with À là. Benjamin study was to shed light on the linguistics process involved in deriving À là from their individual sentential, as well shows how Àlà names constitute an index of the cultural world of the Igbo. To achieve this, he looked in the Igbo worldview noting how the Igbo have a sacred regard for the earth on which they trend and from which their sustenance is drawn. Benjamin work can thus be said to undertake the semantic and symbolic meaning of Àla names, their sociolinguistic functions, and anthropological context. He further analyzed their linguistic characteristics. This research examines Igbo names and how Igbo names are not being given to children as before because of the advent of Christianity which can also be seen in our present research on Ghotuo naming system.

Issah, Noah, & Sulaiman ((2015), investigate the significance of personal names in select African societies, examining how naming practices go beyond mere identification to reflect deeper social, cultural, and spiritual realities. The research emphasises that names play a crucial role in shaping individual identities, social relationships, and cultural heritage. Names are seen as powerful entities that influence an individual’s behaviour, life outcomes, and their position within the community. The study highlights that factors such as religious beliefs, family lineage, historical events, and the conditions surrounding birth contribute to the choice of names. For instance, among the Yoruba of Nigeria, names often reflect the circumstances of birth or align with the family’s religious and cultural values. Similarly, the Akan of Ghana use day names to signify spiritual connections and beliefs about reincarnation. They underscore that names serve not only as identifiers but also as tools for preserving social values and history. This research adds to the understanding of how naming practices are deeply embedded in the social fabric of African communities, with names acting as conduits for cultural expression and social identity. This research helps in Ghotuo anthroponyms.

Mensah (2015), studies personal names and the impact of language contact on naming practices in Cross River State. His research focuses on four linguistic communities; Agwagune, Ejagham, Lokaa, and Efik highlighting how these groups have incorporated Efik personal names due to increasing socio-cultural interactions. The study reveals that Efik, being a dominant regional language, has had a significant influence on the naming practices of these communities, particularly through trade, religion, and education. Factors like the spread of Christianity, colonial influence, and Efik's role as a lingua franca contributed to the borrowing of Efik names. For example, during Christian baptisms, many people adopted Efik names as symbols of their faith. Efik names were borrowed through economic interactions, such as trade relations along the Cross-River Basin, where Efik speaking middlemen played a crucial role in commercial exchanges. Mensah findings show that this borrowing phenomenon is unidirectional, with Agwagune, Ejagham, and Lokaa adopting Efik names due to the latter's socio-economic and political dominance. The studies also highlight how naming practices in these communities reflect broader socio-cultural dynamics, such as the belief in reincarnation, religious practices, and the influence of traditional institutions like the Ékpè society. This study is related to the present research as their focus is on names in Cross River languages while the present research is on linguistics approach to Ghotuo anthroponyms

Abbas (2018), explored the linguistic structure and socio-semantic connotations of Hausa personal names. He sought to fill a gap in existing studies, which primarily focused on the cultural significance of these names, by instead emphasising their linguistic aspects. Previous research, including works by Labaran (1990), Buba (2008), and Chamo (2013), acknowledged the cultural importance of Hausa names but did not delve deeply into their linguistic structure. His studies draw on the “use theory of meaning” by Wittgenstein and Horwich, which posits that the meaning of a word or name is largely determined by the context in which it is used. In the Hausa naming system, this theory is significant because many names carry meanings that go beyond their literal definitions, and the interpretation of these names is influenced by the social circumstances in which they are applied. For example, the name “Ango” which means bridegroom, can also be used as a personal name, and “Buda”, meaning haze, can similarly function as a name. In both cases, the words retain their original spellings and pronunciations but acquire new meanings based on their usage. To conduct this research Abbas collected data from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was gathered from interviews with elders in Sokoto's Marina market, where fifteen individuals provided insights into the origins and meanings of various Hausa names. The secondary data came from previous research studies on Hausa naming conventions. Abbas then categorised Hausa names into several groups, based on the factors influencing the naming process. The study classified Hausa names into five categories based on the rationale behind their selection: names indicating time or period of birth, names reflecting the circumstances of birth, names based on physical appearance, kinship names, and names derived from occupations. Many personal names are formed through the combination of words or phrases, such as “Ciitumù”(a child born during the first harvest of millet) and Shàaraana” (a child born during the sunny period). Abbas also highlighted that some names function as full phrases or

sentences. For example, “Àbaamù” means “let us have it,” while “Sòodangi” translates to “love of relations,” showing how complete sentences or commands can serve as personal names. The structure of Hausa names reflects both the socio-cultural context and the linguistic rules of the Hausa language, revealing the intertwined nature of language and culture in name formation. This research work is related to the present as it focuses on naming structure of Hausa while the present study is in Ghotuo language.

Odeh & Aboh (2020) examine personal names in Urhobo using a sociolinguistic and linguistic anthropological approach. This research employs a qualitative research and a descriptive research design, analysing data collected from selected school registers in Urhobo speaking areas. The study reveals that Urhobo names often involve compounding, with certain segments being elided during this process. It identifies three main typologies of Urhobo names: festive/day names, theophoric names (those invoking deities), and metaphoric names. The findings emphasise that Urhobo anthroponyms are not merely labels but serve as indexes reflecting the sociocultural realities, philosophies, and belief systems of the Urhobo people. The authors conclude that Urhobo names are deeply embedded with cultural meanings. This study uses Urhobo language while this present study is in Ghotuo language.

Abiodun, Olaiya, & Oladeji (2022), investigated on Yoruba personal names, specifically focusing on those derived from proverbs. The research identified that many Yoruba personal names started as appellations, nicknames or titles based on physical traits, behaviour, or significant life events. Over time, these appellations, often rooted in proverbs, evolved into personal names. These names are not just tagging for identification but are deeply embedded in the sociocultural and philosophical worldview of the Yoruba people. They reflect values such as hope, caution, wisdom, and social responsibility. For instance, proverbs like “Alatishe lo mo ara re” (a person who solves their own problems) were shortened and eventually became names like “Alatishe”. Such names serve as a form of cultural documentation, representing a person’s character, aspirations, or life experiences. This study also highlights the role of proverbs in shaping Yoruba naming conventions, demonstrating how names derived from proverbs encapsulate the philosophy, wisdom, and everyday life experiences of the Yoruba people. The findings underscore the dynamic relationship between language, culture, and identity in Yoruba society. This also plays a significant role in Ghotuo language.

Taiwo (2024), in his findings notes that the Yoruba have a maxi with translates to ‘the condition of the home determines a child’s name’. Thus, the Yoruba name may communicate significant information, such as parental experience, birth circumstance, religious affiliation, professional history, or proximity to the death of another member of the immediate or extended family, etc. And the giving of this names is an important socio cultural of the Yoruba community, hence it is always accompanied by ceremonial activities. Taiwo study therefore underscores the profound significance of names, which are formed in response to pivotal cultural contexts. It's examination of personal names reveals their multifunctional roles within society, bolstering their communicative relevance. And also, the intimate interweaving of language and culture reaffirms that language is profoundly rooted in a given ethnic community’s cultural beliefs, traditions, and practices. This research work is related to

the present as it focuses on maxis in Yoruba language which he translates to the condition of the home a child is born determines a child's name while the present study is in Ghotuo language.

Theoretical framework

Socio-onomastics is defined as the sociolinguistic study of names. The theory is a lens for understanding the connection between names and the socio-cultural contexts in which they are used. Onomastics is the study of names and naming systems while socio-onomastics combines insights from sociolinguistics, which studies the relationship between language and society. This approach enables a deeper analysis of how names function not only as linguistic units but also as carriers of cultural, historical, and social significance.

The interest in socio-onomastics began in the 1970s, and since then there has been conducted research on the topic with varied intensity within the Nordic region. In recent years, however, a renewed interest in the research area has shown: A publication as Carole Hough (ed.) "The Oxford Handbook of Names and Naming" (2016) has a separate chapter on socio-onomastics and Terhi Ainiola & Jan-Ola Östman (eds.) "Socio-onomastics. The pragmatics of names" (2017) is a monograph on socio-onomastics and pragmatics. Recently, there have also emerged several new theories and methods in related research areas that have the potential to contribute to a new development in the field of socio-onomastics. As onomastics developed, researchers began incorporating sociolinguistic perspectives, leading to the emergence of socio-onomastics. This branch of study, advanced by scholars like Coates and Cameron, focuses on how social factors such as ethnicity, gender, religion, and historical events influence naming practices. Coates (2000) highlighted the importance of names as social tools that reflect and reinforce cultural values, while Cameron (1995) explored how language practices, including naming, intersect with social power and identity. The socio-onomastic theory emphasises that names are not just linguistic labels but also reflections of social structures, historical events, and cultural values. The socio-onomastic theory also examines how external factors, such as language contact and colonisation, influence naming systems, leading to changes in linguistic forms and cultural meanings over time. For this study on Ghotuo anthroponyms, socio-onomastic theory is highly relevant as it provides the tools to analyse the cultural and social dimensions of naming within the Ghotuo community. By applying this approach, the research examines how Ghotuo names reflect the community's traditions, social structures, and values, while also considering the influence of external factors like language contact. The theory also allows an exploration of the linguistic structures of Ghotuo names, and examine how names serve as tools for identity formation, cultural preservation, and social interaction. By understanding the cultural significance of Ghotuo naming practices through this framework, the research contributes to the broader field of sociolinguistics and onomastics while preserving the unique linguistic and cultural heritage of the Ghotuo community.

3. Data presentation and analysis

3.1. Personal names

The study of personal names is known as anthroponyms which falls under the domain of onomastics also known as the scientific investigation of the origin, meaning and geographical distribution of names. Onomastics is made up of various branches which include; Toponymastics (study of place names), Hydronymastics (study of names of bodies of water), Anthroponymastics (the study of personal names), Chrematonymastics (study of names of things), Oronymastics (study of names of mountains). Microtoponymastics (study of names of inhabitable places), and Hodonymastics (study of names of road).

Anthroponymy is a branch of onomastics, which focuses on the study of names in general. Personal names reflect the values, traditions, and histories of the communities that create and use them. Through names, individuals are connected to their families, communities, and larger cultural identities. Names are not just labels but are deeply rooted in the cultural, social, and linguistic fabric of societies. Personal names are universal, yet their significance varies greatly across cultures. In some societies, names are chosen based on the circumstances of birth, reflecting hopes or blessings for the individual. In others, names are tied to historical figures or ancestral lineage, preserving collective memory and cultural identity. In many African communities, names often signify the experiences or events surrounding a child's birth. These names are carefully chosen, sometimes during elaborate ceremonies, as they carry profound meanings and serve as a connection between the individual and their community. Personal names cannot be overstated. They are vital for individual and collective identity, serving as markers of belonging and heritage. Beyond their practical use for identification, names carry symbolic meanings that reflect the values and aspirations of a society. In Nigeria, personal names play a crucial role in preserving cultural diversity and linguistic traditions. They are vessels of history, carrying the stories of families and communities through generations. Names also instill pride and a sense of connection, reinforcing an individual's ties to their roots. In essence, personal names are much more than mere words, they are cultural artefacts, saturated in meaning and significance. The study of personal names opens a window into the traditions, values, and histories of the societies that create them, making it an essential area of research for understanding human identity and culture.

3.2. Naming processes in Ghotuo

In Otuo tradition when a child is born, the name is influenced by several factors, including the family's financial situation at the time of birth, the events or circumstances surrounding the child's birth, and the day of the week the child is born. The naming ceremony takes place on the eighth day after the child's birth at the father's house. During the ceremony, the oldest man in the father's family leads the event. Items such as bitter kola, sugar, schnapps, honey, palm oil, and money are used by the elder to pray for the child. After the prayers, the parents present a list of chosen names to the elder, who may make changes to the list before officially announcing the child's name to the guests. One of the most notable

things done on this day is the application of powder on the face by the guest, it symbolises happiness.

3.3. Structure of Ghotuo Anthroponyms

Based on the data collected, Ghotuo personal names follow different patterns. These patterns are explained below.

3.3.1. Simple names

Simple names are single word names, often made up of a single morpheme. They are straightforward and usually do not combine multiple elements or carry complex structures. Simple names are often easy to pronounce and remember, making them widely used in various cultures. They are distinct from compound or descriptive names because they do not combine different words or ideas. They are concise and often rooted in the language and cultural traditions of the community, making them an essential part of personal naming systems worldwide. This structure of anthroponyms in Ghotuo can be seen in the table below:

Table 1:

Name	Gloss
Qfure	Peace
Inaghona	Gift
Ifiemọ	Love
Uzẹhẹ	Praise
Auba	Blessing
Oje/Qba	King
Qmọha	Girl
Qgbadi	Great
Ose	Beauty
Afue	Wealth
Amudohi	Hope
Adua/Ero	Prayer
Agẹli	Angel
Anheyi	Success
Ileghao	Progress

Ikwinì/Ọhamhoje	Queen
Ọgbadi	Great
Ọnhọse	Precious
Nyezho	Believe
Akugbe	Unity
Aregbenyẹ	Endurance
Aima/Ima	Destiny
Eghoghọ	Joy
Adova	Victory
Adiyhelhigha	Confidence
Ágbáá/Itoto	Power
Ose	Precious

3.3.2. Compound names

Compound names consist of two or more morphemes combined to create a name. Compound names are names formed by combining two or more elements, usually morphemes or words, to create a single meaningful name. These names often carry richer meanings than simple names because they blend multiple ideas, attributes, or concepts. Compound names are common in Ghotuo cultures and typically reflect significant cultural, religious, or familial values. This structure of anthroponyms in Ghotuo can be seen in the table below:

Table 2:

Compound names	Gloss
Oisa + zoka God thank = Oisazoka	God thank you
Oisa + ma + aye = Oisamaye God create life	God the creator of life
Afe + ikhe = Afeikhe House wait	I wait in the house
Ofo + mu = Ofomu Peaceful with	I have peace

Omo + uwa = Omuwa Child blessing	Child of blessing
Agbo + ifo = Agboifo Life never finish	Life does not finish
Eke + mhe + nhe = Ekemhenhe Mind my know	I know my mind
Okpo + oso = Okposo Great person	Someone that is great
Afue + iri = Afueiri Wealth in	I am in wealth
Afe + idia = Afeidia House stay/live	I stay/live in the house
Oli + ime = Olime Go Farm	Someone that goes to the farm
Afe + ije = Afeikhe House king	House of kings
Omo + eghe = Omo eghe Child sweet	Child is sweet.
Ofu + udo = Ofudo Peaceful mind	Person with peaceful mind
Omo + khose = Omokhose Child beauty	Child is beauty.

The names above explain how names are formed through compounding, often reflecting cultural values or significant events. They are particularly significant in societies where names are used to preserve family history, express religious faith, or commemorate important events. These names allow for creative expression, making them a vital aspect of naming traditions worldwide.

3.3.3. Desententialised names

Desententialised names are those that originated from full sentences but have been shortened into a single word form. Desententialisation is a process whereby a sentence is reduced to a noun. This section examines how these names retain their original meaning despite the linguistic simplification, providing examples and their cultural implications.

Table 3:

Sentence	Desententialised name	Gloss
Mhi + de + gbe + uwa I fall beat Wealth	Idegbuwa	I fall into wealth
Mhi + de + na + obe I do not fall for enemy	Idenobe	I will not fall for the enemy
Mhi + ma + afe + dia I have house live	Imafedia	I have a house to live/stay
Onho + hi + oqua One staying farm	Ohioqua	One staying in the farm.
Onho + ruohe + ame One falling rain	Oruame	One falling rain
Omo + khi + afe Child is house	Omokhafa	Child is house
I + nhe + re I well come	Inhere	I well come
A + khi + gbe They can't kill	Akhigbe	They can't kill
Okhu + mhe + ode Pursuer me fall	Okhumeode	My pursuer will fall
Ua + de Riches come	Uade	Riches come

The names in the table above are structured as sentences combined into a single name. These names align with the Socio-onomastic theory of Ghotuo anthroponyms, highlighting the cultural and social beliefs of the Ghotuo people. According to these beliefs, a name is more than just a form of identification; it also holds significant influence over the future or destiny of the individual.

3.4. Typology of Ghotuo anthroponyms

This section categorises Ghotuo names based on their thematic and functional roles within the community.

3.4.1. Festival/Days of the week

This subsection examines names derived from significant days, events, or festivals. For instance, names like “Ofua” (born on a special day) may reflect the cultural practice of associating names with specific times or occasions.

Table 4

Names	Gloss
Oduaki	Market Day (female)
Edeki	Market Day (male)
Ovie	Ivie festival
Igoh	Igoh Festival Day
Erukpe	Feast Day
Ogbewee (male) Agbisi (female)	Ewagle festival Day

The names above show the period a child was born, the first name in the table “Edeki” is a male name that was born on market day, while the female is called “Oduaki”. The same phenomenon also applies to the other names listed in Table 4.

3.4.2. Theophoric names

Theophoric names, also known as God-centred names, are another category of Ghotuo anthroponyms. These names reflect the Otuo people’s belief in the existence and supremacy of Osalobua (God) but mostly call Oisa (God). Within onomastics, theophoric names are recognised as those that incorporate or reference God. From the perspective of linguistic anthropology, these names serve as markers that provide insight into the circumstances surrounding the bearer’s conception or birth. Some examples of such names include:

Table 4

Sentence	Names	Gloss
Oisa+ khuai + mḥe God exalt me	Oisakhuaimḥe	God exalt me
Oisa + zḥka God thank	Oisazḥka	Thank you God/ God thank you
Oisa + ma + ye God create world	Oisamaye	God create the world
Oisa + khoje God king	Oisakhoje	God is king
Oisa + gbai God Mighty/ big	Osaigbai	God is big/mighty
Oisa + emi God Something	Oisaemi	God is Something
Oisa + zḥ + oje God Choose king	Oisazoje	God chooses a king
Oisa + gbe + oḍe God make way	Oisagbode	God makes a way
Oisa + ma + oje God make king	Oisamoje	God creates a king
Oisa + zḥ God chooses	Oisazḥ	God chooses
Oisa + ruḥ God is	Oisaruh	There is God
Oisa + eḡḥe + mḥe God Like/sweet me	Oisaḡḥemḥe	I like God

The Otuo people believe in God and also reference him in their names. All the names presented above are God acknowledge names. When a child is born if there was any complication the mother experienced during her cause of delivery, the child can be name “Oisagbai” to remind themselves that God is mighty. A couple can be barren for years and decide to name their child “Oisazḥka” to show their gratitude. From the examples above, the Ghotuo people believe in the Supernatural being who they rely on it times of difficulties and shows their gratitude through the names they bear.

3.4.3 Metaphoric names

Metaphoric names are those that use metaphors or analogies to describe a person or object. These names often carry symbolic meanings that go beyond their literal interpretation. They are sometimes used to reflect an individual's traits or characteristics. Examples of names in this category include

Table 5

Udugbai	Heart
Ọruame	Rain
Ọfovọ	Sun
Akọudo	Stone
Èdaigbin	River

For instance, “Udugbai” a name given to a person with a strong heart while “Ọruame” is one who brings rain. “Èdaigbin” means an elephant cannot be killed by a river that’s a person cannot be killed by a river. “Akọudo” Stone cannot be cracked by the teeth, which also symbolises how strong a person can be or his. “Ọfovọ” a person that lessen the intensity of the sun.

4.4.3 Influence of Language contact on Ghotuo.

Language contact has significantly influenced the Ghotuo language and naming practices due to their geographical proximity to Yoruba speaking communities, particularly Ondo State. This contact has resulted in the Ghotuo people adopting Yoruba names, reflecting cultural and linguistics exchange. Shared boundaries facilitate intermarriages, trade, and social interactions, fostering the assimilation of Yoruba names into the Ghotuo naming system. Examples of these names are below

Table 6

Names	Gloss
Olufemi	God loves me
Fumilayo	Give me Joy
Oluwatobi	God is great
Boluwatife	It is as God wills
Adebayo	The crown meets with joy
Àjàyí	A child born face upwards
Adekunle	The crown fills the house with wealth

Títílàyò	Joy lasts forever
Oluwatobi	God is great
Jùmòké	Beloved and cherished by all.
Inúmidùn	I am happy
Táiwò	(The one who) tastes the world/life.
Kéhìndè	One who comes second.
Òguńlọ̀wọ̀	Òguń has respect.
Bọ̀sẹ̀dé	Came with the (new) week
Ọ̀láwọ̀lé	Success has entered the home.
Afọ̀labí	One born in a wealthy manner, place or time.
Ìfẹ̀lúwa	The love of God/God's will.
Àlábí	One born to the white cloth (of Ọ̀bàtálá)
Ìdòwú	A child born after a set of twins.
Èmílọ̀lá	The breath of life is honorable.

4. Conclusion Here are mo

This study investigated the naming practices within the Ghotuo speech community, focusing on their linguistic structures, cultural significance, and the influence of language contact. Names are revealed to be more than mere identifiers; they are cultural artifacts that encapsulate societal values, religious beliefs, and historical narratives. The study demonstrates how names reflect the Ghotuo people's worldview, serving as a connection between language, identity, and culture. The study concludes that Ghotuo anthroponyms are more than mere linguistic constructs; they are rich repositories of the community's cultural and social identity. By documenting the naming processes, structures, and typologies of Ghotuo names, the research preserves vital aspects of the language and culture that might otherwise be lost. Furthermore, it highlights the dynamic nature of naming practices, shaped by both internal traditions and external influences like language contact. The findings, not only contribute to the field of sociolinguistics and onomastics but also play a crucial role in preserving the cultural and linguistic heritage of the Ghotuo community for future generations.

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