

BASÀ SENTENTIAL NAMES: A BRIEF DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

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Abstract

This paper studies Basà personal names composed in sentence forms: declarative, imperative, interrogative/question, serial verb construction (SVC) and reflexive. The study attempts to describe the structural, semantic and pragmatic features of these categories of Basà names to uncover their complex morphological, syntactic properties, their fascinating grammatical peculiarities and propositions. The paper argues that Basà names are a window to the complex grammatical processes of the language. It seeks to answer the question: How are Basà sentences shrunk to derive personal names? Ethnographic data for the study were obtained through interviews, metalinguistic conversations, and participant observations in Basà speaking domains such as Bassa Local Government of Kogi state, Nasarawa and Toto Local Government councils of Nasarawa State and the Federal Capital Territory (North Central Nigeria) respectively. The investigation adopted the linguistic descriptive method using the Leipzig Glossing Rule to interpret the data obtained. The findings from this study show that Basà names are characterized by different sentential structures with semantic and pragmatic attributes underlain by extra linguistic features which make an input into the grammar of the language. The study discovered that larger linguistic units such as clauses and sentences are shrunk or desententialized lexemes by various linguistic processes namely, phonological, morphological, and morphophonological strategies to derive words and compounds as personal names.

Keywords: Basà, personal names, sentential, syntactic, morphological and grammar

Introduction

Basà language is spoken in different locations in North Central Nigeria such as, the six area councils of the Federal Capital Territory; Kokona, Nasarawa, Toto and Doma Local Government Councils of Nasarawa State; Bassa, Dekina, Ankpa and Kotonkarfe Local Government Areas of Kogi State; Kontagora Local Government of Niger State; Agatu and Markurdi Local Government Areas of Benue State. Some of these locations are characterized by different dialectal variants, each is identified by its name, but all varieties are mutually intelligible. Basà language is classified as belonging to Western-Kainji of Kainji language family, also referred to as Rubasa (Basa Benue) (Crozier and Blench, 1992:32).

The study on personal names have been carried out in the onomastic literature in different disciplines such as linguistics Akinasa (1980), Ubahakwe (1981), Uduoyoye (1982), Essien (1986), Aceto (2002), Agyekum (2006), Agbo (2014) Mensah (2013),(2015), and (2017) Mensah & Ishima(2020), Okon(2017); Psychology, Steele(1988), Steele & Smith(1989); Anthropology Bean (1990), Obeng(1998), Ukpong(2007), Author(2015)&(2017); Sociology Ngade(2011), Suzman(1994),Author(2016) etc. Study on personal names is very pivot to the socio-cultural fibre of every society as there is no known society in the world which does not give names to every new born child. The foregoing fact justifies the academic interest cultivated by researchers to study personal names as it is not just an index of identification rather, underlain by different forms of communication.

Anderson (2004:435) presents a syntactic and morphological comparison of French English and Greek names where he proposes the universality that names belong to the category of determinatives such as pronouns and determiners but are inherently neither definite nor indefinite whose functions differ from regular argument of the predicator. Conclusively, he argues that each language varies. His argument reveals that the grammatical structure of personal names usually synchronizes with the grammar of the language. Mensah and Ishima (2020) argue otherwise that this may not always be true for all languages. They proof this with contemporary German names where Plank (2011:269) shows that family names in this language have “subtle but comprehensively severed ties with their ancestral word classes in their morphology upon attaining name status inspite of their origin in nouns and adjectives and in spite of retaining the phonology and syntax of their origin”. He further argues that this manifests in inflection and derivation and thus, renders the traditional word class categorization of family names as a type of noun in languages, especially language like German which can affect both the lexicon and grammar. In virtually all African naming systems, names have meaning based on their semantic and pragmatic contents. This assertion is contrary to researchers like Searle (1958), Dixon and Lyons (1977) whose opinion is that personal names do not have sense or meaning but what they only represent is unique and individuating.

Mensah & Ishima (2020) argue that in the African context, little attention has been paid to the grammatical description of personal names. They reported that (Nwangi, 2015:259) undertook a linguistic study of Kikuyu grammar and observed that the coding of information into names is basically characterized by lexical, syntactic and pragmatic roles of the language. He demonstrates in his investigation that Gikuyu grammar is largely contained in its personal names. His investigation was based on certain morphosyntactic phenomena like compounding, affixation and reflexivisation which show how the feminine names in the language are grammaticalized. This plausible fact reveals that names are words that are attested in the lexicon which have semantic structure and exhibit morphosyntactic characteristics of lexical items; thus, constitute abstract properties of grammar (Mensah & Ishima, 2020).

Hussein (1997:25) submits that personal names are ambiguous properties of every linguistic community given that names are words (with expression character) that exist in a language which are an essential part of the linguistic repertoire of their bearers, users and givers are valuable carriers of identity that reflect the dominant attitude and socio-cultural value of a community. Names are founded on people’s cultural heritage, and therefore reflect major currents in their history and

worldview. For this reason, they show deep attachment to indigenous traditions and embed significant psychological and pragmatic attributes. It is also believed that names in Africa have deep spiritual context and cosmology (Obeng, 1988; Mensah, 2015). Mapara, 2013:15) opines that personal naming in Shona culture practice is seen as a rite of passage marking the transition from the womb into the community. This opinion is supported by the claim of Mensah and Ishima (2020:4) which says that, personal naming practices, especially in Africa, “act as narrative discourses where stories that provide insights to lived experience are told”. To Haviland et al (2013:130), they define it “as a social transition from a state of nature to a state of culture”.

In Basà naming tradition, personal names are given based on certain social and cultural parameters which require reflecting the situation or circumstances surrounding the conception and birth of the child, the situation surrounding the parents, family, community etc. Imoh, 2019 studies the structure of Basà personal names where he outlines the various structure of Basà personal names, namely, words, phrases, sentences etc. This work differs from it in that it seeks to dwell mainly on sentential names and categorize them according to grammatical types and functions.

Imoh, Amende & Dansabo (2020) undertook a study on the Ethno-Pragmatics of Basà personal names. Their study differs from this in that it deals with the interface of Basà language and their cultural practices; how language is used vis-à-vis cultural practice. Though, this work does not treat naming in isolation with culture, it attempts a structural investigation at the sentential level and a taxonomy of sentence types and their complex morphosyntax and morphophonology unveiling their underlying structure.

In the onomastic literature of African naming practices, especially the aspect of grammatical description, there are a number of related studies in linguistic onomastics such as; Mensah & Ishima (2020) who investigate sentential names in Tiv and categorized Tiv names into several categories of sentences, examining the semantic, pragmatic, social and spiritual meanings. Their investigation shows a reflection of grammatical structure of the Tiv language. Mande (2009) discovered that in Tshivenda, names have referential and cultural meaning composed from nouns, verbs, adjectives and longer units like phrases, compounds and relativization. He claims that, in this language, naming forms an indispensable part of grammar. Linguistically, Mapara argues that names are part of language and constitute phrasal, clausal and sentential categories. further argues that, they may be semantically characterized in complete statements, questions, or commands which are appropriately situated in the realm of language study. In Kamu, Jauro & Wappa (2013) undertook a structural study where they categorized names into their morpho-semantic attributes namely, word classes and studied their semantic and pragmatic meaning.

Linguistic onomastics of personal naming practice reveals that these names can be coded in different linguistic categories such as lexemes, phrases, clauses and sentences of various types and functions. These possibilities have not been explored extensively to explicate the various grammatical structures, especially, in Nigerian situation which is productive in this wise. Hence, this study aims at exploring to fill the existing gap on the grammar of Basà names, especially, those coded in sentences as a way of contributing to the onomastic literature.

Data for this investigation were elicited through ethnographic/linguistic field work in Basà speaking areas of Kogi, Nasarawa States and Federal Capital Territory (North-Central) Nigeria. The descriptive linguistic survey approach was adopted for the study. Selection of informants was done randomly considering the fact that the consultants are native speakers with native intuitions, which were between twenty (20) to seventy (70) years of age and their willingness to participate in the investigation. These randomly selected informants were both literate and non-literate native speakers of the Basà language. The selection was also based on their experience and good knowledge of Basà naming convention and also vast knowledge of culture both as name givers and bearers/users. The primary source of data elicitation included oral interview, partial integration observation, metalinguistic interaction and focus group discussion with the sample population. The data elicited were verified by the researchers given their native intuitions of the Basà language. The data were analyzed in four tiers, namely, the raw data presentation follow by the Leipzig Glossing Rules then the semantic meaning and finally the pragmatic meaning.

Data Presentation and Analysis

This section presents the data elicited for the study. Basà sentential names are categorized according to various sentential functions and types. Since most of the names are desententialised to derive the surface form, the names are presented in their underlying form taking into account their derivational processes leading to their surface form. The analysis also provides account of inflection for tense, aspect, negation, and other pertinent factors such as pragmatic meaning underlying the names. The following presents the taxonomy of Basà sentential names.

Imperative sentences are used to give order or directive or make requests. Cowan (2008) asserts that it is used to make commands. In Basà, just the way it is obtainable in English and other languages, the second person subject either singular or plural is usually elided which is considered as the addresses (Van Valin, 2001: 141). This category can be exemplified with the following data in (1):

- 1a. Zhága nàambê → Zhánàambè
 go.LMP to bush
 ‘Go to the bush’
 Pragmatic sense: ‘Don’t die’ Death preventive
- b. Námá
 stay/be
 ‘Live’
 Pragmatic sense: ‘Don’t die’

A common and important grammatical feature of the imperative sentences is that they begin with a verb in their present infinite form. Just the way imperatives are in English and other languages, examples in (1a-b) do not begin with a subject-NP. The underlying subject can only be derived in the deep structure of the sentence (Mensah & Ishima, 2020). This argument can be supported with what Van Valin (2010:295) said that the addressee in imperative constructions is normally a subject cross-linguistically.

The fact that *ma* which indicates plurality does not feature after the verb in (1a) shows that the underlying subject in both examples is second person singular. Examples in (1a-b) indicate command addressing second person singular. Pragmatically, it means the opposite, i.e., a situation where a couple has recorded infant mortality, the command *Zhánàambê* ‘go the bush’ connotatively means “Don’t die like other children died”. In (1b), the meaning is semantic in nature where the name givers address the spiritual parents or deities through the child to allow the child live. In (1a), the predicate phrase is complemented by PP whereas, in (1b) it has no complement, in this case, the sentence is composed only of the verb phrase which is transitive and does not require an object. The imperative structure in (1a) forms a compound name in the language i.e. it is derived from three lexical items where the last syllable of the verbal base is elided. The compound in (1a) is left-headed contrary to RHR of William (1981). The headedness parameter of Basà is in compliance with Owolabi (1995) which specifies left headedness.

Negative imperatives are more productive in Basà language than the affirmative ones. They have similar characteristics as their affirmative counterparts, namely, they don’t have an overt subject and make a command and not necessarily a request. This category of Basà names can be exemplified with the corpus in (2a-c) below:

2a. Tà inà → Tà’inà
 NEG.IMP lost
 ‘Don’t get lost’
 Pragmatic: ‘Don’t die’

b. Tà mà hòngá → Tàhò(mà)ngá
 NEG.IMP 1SG laugh
 ‘Don’t laugh at me’
 Pragmatic sense: ‘Don’t mock me, I’m still hopeful’

c. Tà ndá → Tándá
 NEG.IMP do
 ‘Don’t do it’
 Pragmatic sense: ‘Name indicating disagreement’

The subjects of the negative imperative are not overt in the surface structure but feature only in the deep structure thus, they are characterized by an empty category in the subject position. The data in (2a-c) above begin with the negative marker *tà* ‘implies command, not just a request. In (2a), the negative operator *tà* and the verb *inà* ‘lose’ ‘don’t get lost’. The deep meaning is an appeal to deities through the child’s name to prevent the named child from dying. *Tà(mà)hòngá* is a compound, composed of a negative imperative marker, the first person singular object and the verb ‘laugh’. It is a command, instructing mockers to stop their mockery as the name giver(s) are hopeful of a better and a prospective future. *Tándá* is composed by a negative imperative operator and a verb. This name is given to a child who is a product of a controversial marriage, especially, where parents or some relations do not support the marriage.

This category of declarative sentences is very productive in Basà personal names which are used to make statements or state a fact. They are utterances that are characterized by having truth-value

as they are used to express propositions and can play a role in inference as either a premise or conclusion (Belhap, 1990:1). In agreement with Belhap's view, Mensah & Ishima (2020) opine that declarative sentences have morphosyntactic characteristics in addition to semantic and pragmatic attributes. This category of Basà names can be exemplified in (3) below:

- 3a. Ùwè ì zhé → Wèzhé
 something AGR-S go.PST
 'Something went through'
 Pragmatic sense: 'answered prayer'
- b. Ùrányè ò shé ùwè → Rányèshéwè
 life AGR-S be something
 'Life is important'
 Pragmatic sense: 'With life, there is hope'
- c. Ùwè Ñ dáma → Wàndáma
 thing 1SG surprise
 'I am surprised'
 Pragmatic: 'Miracle/surprise'

The sentences in (3a-c) are declarative sentences. The structures differ from (2) in that they have overt subject-NPs followed by subject-agreement markers in (a) and (b) then the verb phrase. In (b) the verb is transitive; hence, it subcategorizes an object. In the derived form, the subject agreement markers are elided deriving *Wèzhé* and *Rányèshéwè* respectively. In (c), the subject-NP is followed by an object-NP before the intransitive verb i.e. Subject Object Verb (SOV). The basic word order in Basà is Subject-Verb-Object (SVO), but in a declarative sentence where the subject is third person, and the patient is first person, second person or third person, the order changes to SOV and it is grammatical in the language whereas, if the basic word order (SVO) is maintained, it becomes ungrammatical.

This study also discovered declarative sentence names in future tense, that is, an action happening in the future. This subcategory of declarative sentence names can be seen in (4) below:

- 4a. Bì tẹ zhẹ → Tẹzhẹ
 3SG FUT/AUX go
 'S/he will go'
 Pragmatic: 'The child will die like others'
- b. Bọ zhananẹ → Zhananẹ
 3SG go.FUT-HAB
 'S/he is going again'
 Pragmatic: 'The child will die like others'
- c. Bì zhẹ nà àwara → Wara
 3SG go.FUTPREP bush
 'S/he/ will go to the bush'
 Pragmatic: 'The child will die and the spirit will escape to the woods'

The names in (4a-c) appear pessimistic but are actually prayers to deities to prevent further child mortality, otherwise called death prevention names. In (4a-c), the sentential name *Tèzhè* is derived from *Bìtèzhè* where the subject-NP *bì* deletes leaving the future marker and the main verb *zhè*. In (4b), the subject also deletes leaving the verb and the suffix *-nanè* which means repeatedly or habitually. It implies that the named infant will also die like others. In (iii) *wara* is derived by chipping the subject *bì*, the verb *zhè* and the preposition *nà*.

The study also discovered present continuous/progressive tense in the language as sentential personal names, where a verb form is used that combines the present tense with the continuous aspect as exemplified in (5a-c). It can employ both indicative and subjunctive moods. This type of tense is formed with the subject and the present participle form of the main verb which is usually inflected with *-ing* affix in English. This inflectional type is not morphologically marked but analytically with the particle *tà*. This subcategory of Basà personal names can be seen in (5) below:

5 a. *Ń tà shilanè → Tàshilanè*

ISG PROG hope

‘I am hoping’

Pragmatic sense: ‘I am hopeful for a change of story’

b. *Ń tà haànsà → Taàsa*

ISG PROG think

‘I am thinking’

Pragmatic sense: ‘I am pondering on the situations/happenings around me’

c. *Ń tà ‘nwanè → Tà’wanè*

ISG PROG hold

‘I am still holding’

Pragmatic sense: I am keeping the baby pending when the forces in charge decide.

Example (5a) is a sentence composed of first person singular subject followed by a present progressive marker and a verb that is both transitive and intransitive. In the derived/surface form, the subject-NP is clipped combining the progressive marker *tà* and the verb stem. This process is common in the entire corpus in (5). The name is used to express hope in the midst of negative situation which is also a form of prayer to divinity by the name giver(s). (b) is also used to express displeasure over unpleasant happenings to the name givers or family. The name is an expression seeking answers to some unpleasant situation which has probably, occurred repeatedly. (c) is clearly a death prevention name where the name giver(s), considering the past repeated infant mortality, express their desperation by saying, “well, we are keeping the named baby pending when the gods will determine what happens to it” the name is used to make a desperate prayer to deities to forestall further infant mortality.

This investigation also uncovered another subcategory of declarative category called negative declarative sentences. Here, the name giver expresses helplessness in addressing prevailing unpleasant situations. This type is composed in a sentence that is headed by a subject, followed by a negative operator which negativizes the entire proposition and a complement which expresses the helplessness of the name giver. The marking of negation is not morphological, but analytical. This can be furnished with examples in (6).

6. a. \acute{N} zá uhugwà → $Z\acute{a}hugw\grave{a}$
 ISG NEG strength /power
 ‘I have no strength’

Pragmatic sense: ‘Expression of lack of power or helplessness’

b. \acute{N} zá iyi m\`e hi\`n → $Z\acute{e}m\grave{e}hi\`n$
 ISG NEG thing to say
 ‘I have nothing to say/ I’m speechless’

Pragmatic sense: Expression of Gods wonders in a situation beyond the name givers ability’

c. \grave{I} zá iyi cí bù → $Z\acute{e}y\grave{i}c\grave{i}b\grave{u}$
 3SG NEG thing reach 3SG.OBJ
 ‘Nothing compares her’

Pragmatic sense: Nothing compares with a human being’

d. $B\grave{o}$ zá utumwa → $Z\acute{a}tumwa$
 3SG NEG message
 ‘S/he has no message’

Pragmatic: ‘The named child is not going to be useful’

All the names in (6) are characterized by common derivational morphological processes where the sentence subject clips combining the negativizing operator with the predicate to form the compound, the only exception is (ii) and (iv) where \acute{i} and u elide respectively.

(6i) expresses helplessness in a prevailing situation of the name givers. Sometimes, it is used as death prevention name, or helplessness in prevailing circumstances etc. in (ii), it is used to express divine sovereignty, where the beneficiaries or name givers are speechless regarding the intervention of divinity. $Z\acute{e}y\grave{i}c\grave{i}b\grave{u}$ in (iii) implies the superiority of the gift a child which is comparable to none; $Z\acute{a}tumwa$ in (iv) is a death prevention name where the name giver expresses their displeasure regarding incessant infant mortality thereby appealing to deities through this negative appellation to spare the new born baby.

It was discovered in this study that, like other languages, Basà names are framed in question form. That is, names are framed in such a way that they require eliciting information from the addressee. The types of questions discovered in this study are Wh-questions which require content information (Imoh, 2019). The other subcategory of question is neither Wh-question nor polar question but riddles. Riddles are questions that describe things or people in extremely difficult and confusing ways which are answered in clever and amusing manner, which are considered as a clever way of teaching. They usually require an answer as their meaning, followed by a deeper or pragmatic meaning (Imoh, 2019). They are also used as personal and zoonyms (impersonal names) in the Basà language, these humorous puzzles are related to the meanings of these names by virtue of circumstances surrounding the birth of a child etc. The riddles themselves are not sentences but they trigger a response or an answer in a sentence form. Interrogative sentences can be furnished with examples in (7) and riddles in (8) below:

7. C\`e àb\`o b\`ane\`e? → C\`aab\`ane

where 2SG come from
 ‘Where do you come from?’
 Pragmatic: ‘Expression of shock resulting from delay in child bearing’

The formation of the interrogative sentential name in (7) is characterized thus: the wh-question operator *cée* glides from high (H) tone to mid (M), the front high-mid vowel (/e/) of the wh operator is replaced with a back low sound /a/ in the derived form. The addressee (second person singular) is clipped completely thereby compounding the question operator with the verb base to derive *Cáabáne*. The derived name maintains the gliding tones of the replaced vowels. Example (7) is a rhetorical question whose intention is to emphasize a particular point. It does not require any answer but to stress the social relationship between the participants in the discourse (Mensah&Ishima, 2020). Examples (8a-e) are used to furnish the other category of interrogative names, i.e. riddles.

8a. Riddle: *Àkaàzùga*

Answer: Ùwèbiye húrí-shi ihènú
 blessing pass-NEG time

‘A blessing does not delay/overdue’

Pragmatic sense: ‘A blessing is never overdue or late.’

b. Riddle: *Nèkèzèzé*

Answer: Àbá nàkà inè bọ̀tọ̀ Àgwatana náa nàkà inèé bọ̀
 2SG grind POSS person God PROG grind POSS 2SG

‘If you grind for someone, God will grind for you too’

Pragmatic sense: ‘What you make happen for someone, God will make happen for you’

c. Riddle: *Kwọ́rókàm*

Answer: Àyẹ́-shẹ̀ ògú gádàgà
 3PL eat-NEG inheritance undeserved

‘Inheritances are not given to those who don’t deserve them’

Pragmatic sense: ‘There are defined rules or methods for doing things’

d. Riddle: *Gúda*

Answer: Bọ̀ twá nà bọ̀tọ̀ nù ùhwana
 3SG meet.PST PREP person PREP road

‘S/he met with someone on the road’

Pragmatic sense: ‘reincarnation’

e. Riddle: *Kùtẹ̀pẹ̀*

Answer: Ìyí ì bìye gwọ̀mẹ̀ ùgbe tọ̀ta, òbú tò gbe bi zẹ̀ bá imà iyẹ̀lẹ̀
 Thing AGR good hard find to find if.2SG find 2SG AUX 2SG hold hand

‘Good things are not easily found but when found are jealously guarded’

Pragmatic sense: ‘People value what they labour or struggle to get in life’

The foregoing riddles can further be discussed as follows:

- *Àkaàzùga* could mean or refer to things or a situation where blessings such as wealth, children etc. come at a letter time in life of a couple or family who waited long for them, for instance, a child, especially, a male child. When eventually when the expected breakthrough comes, it is believing that God is the ultimate judge who decides when to bless the beneficiary.
- *Nèkèzèzè* is a caution to people, a lesson cautioning people not to do wrong things because God rewards people according to their deeds, if one does good to others, God will reward them accordingly.
- *Kwórókàm* is also a warning to people who are anxious to get things in a wrong way or get rich quickly. Thus, the rule of inheritance is used to remind one that one can only get an inheritance only and only if they are an heir in the family i.e., there are laid down principles of doing things.
- *Gúda*, this means taking turns; as someone dies in the family, another person is believed to be sent by divinity to replace the deceased. It is used to console people who are bereaved that God will always fill the vacuum by sending a replacement.
- *Kùtèpè* refers to the value people place on what they labour to get or the position they labour to attain. For instance, when a couple waits for a long time to welcome a child, especially a male child, *Kùtèpè*, most appropriately expresses the yearning of such a couple and when eventually the desired child comes, they protect the child and do everything possible to care for it.

Another interesting sentential structure personal names found in the language is serial verbs construction (SVC). Mensah & Ishima (2020:15) define this category of names as those “which are structurally identified as non-coordinated structures in which two verb phrases are adjoined without any coordinators in the surface structure.” Serial verb construction personal names can be exemplified as follows:

9. a. Ndá zhaga →Ndáazhaga
 Do.IMP.2SG go.IMP.2SG
 ‘do and go’

Pragmatic sense: ‘The child, after sometimes will go like others before him/her’

- b. Mmáa zhága →Máazhàgà
 take go
 ‘Take and go’

Pragmatic sense: ‘Leave, your request is granted’

- c. Ndá ù huri → Ndáhuri
 do AGR-Opass
 ‘exceed’

Pragmatic sense: ‘the Excellency of God’

- e. Ñdá mó ’wo
 leave ISG let.AGR-Odie
 ‘Leave me let me die’

Pragmatic sense: ‘This child must not die’

Ndáazhagain (9a) is a compound word composed of two verbs and a death prevention name given to a child whose parents have suffered infant mortality. The name is a command to amale child to do what it can within a short period and leave (die) like others before him. Pragmatically, it makes an appeal or prayers to deities to spare the bearer of the name. In(9b) *Máazhàgà* is a compound of two verbal lexemes which is a suggestion to a couple or a petitioner to deities for fruitfulness, after their petition is granted with an evidence of a child, they are advised to take their blessing (child) and leave. In (9c), it is an expression of praise to God Almighty being excellent in His acts. In (9d), it is an expression of frustration on behalf of the new born as a result of infant mortality, where with anger, the name givers express their anger stemming from incessant child mortality that they are no longer interested in living, and should be left to die. The surface meaning is actually differs from pragmatic/deep meaning which is an appeal to deities to spare the life of the name bearer.

In each case of the category in (9a-d), there is no existence of a coordinating conjunction in the series of verbs which is characteristic of serial verbs constructions (SVC). There is an evidence of a temporal ordering of the actions by the verbs in the constructions. The events and the sentences are construed as occurring one before the other. Mensah & Ishima (2020) argue that the serial verbs have the same syntactic prominence.

Another fascinating category of sentential names in this language is reflexive constructions. This is a grammatical process where the subject is not repeated in the object position where a reflexive notion is expressed in a grammatical construction; rather, a reflexive pronoun is preferred in the object position that is co-referential with the subject. Crystal (1994:330) calls it reflexivization and describes it as a construction where the subject and the object relate or refer to the same entity. This category of Basà names is not very productive, few data wereelicited during the field work which can be exemplified as follows:

- 10 a. Bò màrà ndañ → Màmàndáné
 3SG REFL do.PST-APPL
 ‘S/he did it for her/himself’
- b. Bò màrà njé → Màmànjé
 3SG REFL do.PST
 ‘S/he did him/herself’

The two examples in the foregoing have similar meanings. In (10a), *Màmàndáné* means ‘whatever one does, they do it for themselves’. It bears affinity with the scriptural saying “...whatever a man sows, he shall reap.” Galatians 6:7 or the saying “what goes around comes around”. This means, if someone treats the other people badly, s/he will eventually be treated badly by someone else. The lesson here is; one should not mistreat people. However, (10b) has the same meaning, the only difference is the applicative inflectional morpheme *-njé* attached to the verb base and its function. When such names are given to a new born, it could be used to index certain circumstances surrounding the birth of the child or other happenings at the time of the child’s birth which may not necessarily have a direct bearing on the child’s birth.

Conclusion

This study investigates the phenomenon of sentential personal names in the Basà language whose communicative tendency can deepen one's linguistics knowledge. This investigation shows that sentential names are characterized by important linguistic properties which can provide more empirical insights and facts into linguistic onomastics. It has attempted a systemic investigation of formal grammatical information on the Basà naming practices which unveils the phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics and also stirs other aspects of information beyond the domains of linguistics (extra-linguistics) that underlie personal naming. The study has unearthed facts about the intricacies of sentential names in Basà such as simple sentence which derive names by complex phonological, morphological and morphophonological processes such as elision, clipping, replacement, modification, compounding, affixation etc. that is, larger grammatical units such as clauses and sentences are shrunk into smaller grammatical units such as lexemes and compounds to derive personal names by means of these grammatical strategies. In conclusion, this study aligns with (Chomsky, 1986) which argues that grammar constitutes a tacit knowledge of what the native speakers know about their language, a fact that is applicable to the grammar of names.

Abbreviations

APPL – Applicative
 REFL – Reflexives
 PST – Past
 AGR-S – Subject agreement
 AGR-O – Object agreement
 IMP – Imperative
 NEG – Negative/Negation
 ISG – First Person Singular
 FUT – Future
 HAB – Habitual
 PREP – Preposition
 AUX – Auxiliary
 PROG – Progressive
 3SG – Third Person Singular
 O (BJ) – Object
 2SG – Second Person Singular
 POSS- Possessive
 3PL – Third Person Plural
 AGR – Agreement

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