The structure of Ibibio death prevention names

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Abstract

This paper examines death prevention names among the Ibibio in South-eastern Nigeria, from their structural perspectives. Ibibio death prevention names can generate and maintain some level of assurance and security that is vital for a child's survival, given the implicit assumption that spiritual forces of some kind are at work. These names are believed to link their bearers to their past, ancestors and spirituality. This paper argues that these names represent enriching morphosyntactic properties that provide a window to the grammatical description of the Ibibio language. Their syntax is not constrained to a limited set of structures, thus they are structurally versatile and open ended, representing the various types and functions of sentences in the Ibibio language. The paper concludes with the claim that, in addition to the referential contents and metaphysical presuppositions of these names, they have other formal structural properties that distinguish them from ordinary Ibibio names.

KEYWORDS: personal names, reincarnation, culture, anthromorphism, syntax, Ibibio

Introduction

The Ibibio people are found in the mainland part of the Cross River Basin in south-eastern Nigeria. They are the dominant ethnic nationality in the present day Akwa Ibom State. The population of Ibibio is 3.76 million (based on census demographic data). The Annang and Oro people are their closest neighbours within the state. They share boundaries with the Igbo in the Northwest hinterland and with the Efik Southeast ward. They share a south-west coastal boundary with the Okpobo/Ijaw in Rivers State. They are bounded in the northeast by the cluster of Ejagham nation up to Southern Cameroon (Udo 1983). The Ibibio language belongs to the Niger-Congo family of the Delta-Cross subfamily, which constitutes the Lower-Cross family within the enlarged Cross-River group of languages (Greenberg 1963, Faraclas 1989). Ibibio, together with Efik, Annang, Oro, Ekid, Usakedet,

etc. belongs to this Lower-Cross family. The languages are mutually intelligible with Ibibio although the degree is unidirectional in some cases (e.g. Oro and Ekid).

Different cultures perceive and conceptualise the experience of life in different ways, and language functions as the primary carrier of this cultural nexus. A personal name is one of the important linguistic media for the transmission of the people's traditional heritage. This is because names and naming practices can best be understood in the context of existing cultures and traditions. Kuschel (1988) remarks that there is nexus between names and the socio-cultural life of a people, given the growing recognition that social institutions never develop or exist in cognitive vacuum. Names, therefore, relate with other parts of culture. They are marks of identity, solidarity and social cohesion. In Nigeria, for instance, it is easy to distinguish a Yoruba person from Hausa or Efik through his/her name, because names can (to a very large extent) define the concept of identity, whether individual or group identity. Therefore, Adebija (2000: 353) argues that '... each ethnic group expresses and identifies itself by the language it speaks and its cultural paraphernalia is shaped by its language.' A direct link is established here between language and identity, and names are important indices for the reconfiguration of identity and ethnicity. This is the reason Drury and McCarthy (1980: 310) argue that 'our names objectify our presence as participants in interpersonal transactions, not only for others, but for ourselves as well. In this concern, African names give insights into African culture and identity.

There is a rich body of literature on names and naming practices in Africa (Oduyoye 1982; Ubahakwe 1981; Essien 1986; Mensah 2009) that has dealt specifically with the structure and meanings of Nigerian names. Others have investigated the pragmatics and sociolinguistics of Akan names (Obeng 1998; Agyekum 2006). Ngade (2011) investigates Bakossi (Cameroon) names in relation to its naming culture and identity. Gebre (2010) analyses the effect of contact on the naming practice of the Aare people in Ethiopia. In southern African onomastic literature, extensive works have been done on Zulu personal names (Suzman 1994; Koopman 2000), Xhosa names and nicknames (De Klerk 1996; Neethling 1996), place names and onomastic theories (Raper 1987). Olenyo (2011), and Dromantaite and Baltramonaitiene (2002) have examined personal names from the semantic perspective. They argue that names in the African context are not labels as the case in Western cultures, but have both denotational and connotational meaning, which are derived from existing phenomena with interesting information as language units. Moyo (2012) and Fitpatrick (2012) have equally interrogated the effect of colonialism and slavery on African personal names. While in some instances, such effects changed the ideological conceptions that were embedded in these names, in other cases, African names survived the onslaught of slavery and European domination. African names especially in the diaspora became elements of cultural retention, forms of resistance and means of identity construction.

Equally significant in the onomastic literature is the analysis of Igbo personal names from a morpho-semantic perspective in which it is revealed that the morphology and meaning of Igbo names reflect the Igbo cultural milieu and social universe (Maduagwu 2010). A number of works have been carried out on Ibibio name studies; Essien (1986, 2001) has investigated the structure and meaning of Ibibio names, as

well as providing a linguistic and cultural explication of these names. Clasbery (2012) undertakes a comprehensive analysis of Ibibio names and naming practices from an anthropological perspective. She argues that a number of factors influence the choice of names in Ibibioland, such as time, day, season, or place of birth. Other determinants include a child's look and behaviour, parent's life experience, philosophy, unusual spirit, political and socio-economic circumstances. Ukpong (2007) provides a comprehensive anthroponymic lexicon of Ibibio names and investigates the sources and origin of these names from a historical account.

Names and naming practices have enormous socio-cultural, spiritual and psychological significance in Africa and beyond. This is because names are believed to have inherent power that can indexicalise the lives and behaviours of people, either positively or negatively. According to Agyekum (2006), names are pointers to people's ways of life and socio-cultural experiences, and give deep insights into the cultural patterns, belief, ideology and religion of the people. Beyond these, names can also reflect how people relate with their social and physical environment, especially in their relationship with cosmic powers. Purham (2002) draws attention to the fact that there is a spirituality that binds African people together and guides their physical existence, and in the African cultural worldview, the essential ingredients and essence of everything, including humans, is spiritual. This observation is apt in the context of Ibibio names and naming practices, given that personal names are products of social, cultural and spiritual realities. Names are essential components of the Ibibio essence, especially in their belief in the cycle of life and afterlife. The present study, however, sets out to analyse Ibibio death prevention names from a structural dimension given that they offer sufficient grammatical information, which is a window to understanding the grammar of Ibibio.

Ethnographic and linguistic data for this study were obtained from both primary and secondary sources. This work is an aspect of a larger research project "The ethnopragmatic and structural analysis of Ibibio death prevention names". We employed oral interviews with 30 bearers of death prevention names in Ibibio whose ages range between 20 and 70 in Uyo and Itu Local government areas of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. We interviewed parents, traditional chiefs, church leaders and teachers. These interviews were mainly targeted at understanding the myth behind these death prevention names, their importance and functions. We sought to understand the morphosyntactic composition of these names in terms of their structure. We were able to categorise names into lexical items such as nouns and adjectives, we also identify grammatical processes found in names such as nominalisation, adjectivisation and compounding. The syntactic structure of names was classified into subsystems comprising the major sentence types and their functions in the Ibibio language. Secondary sources were obtained from students of the University of Calabar's (Department of Linguistics and Communication Studies) Matriculation Register and Ukpong's (2007) compendium of Ibibio names.
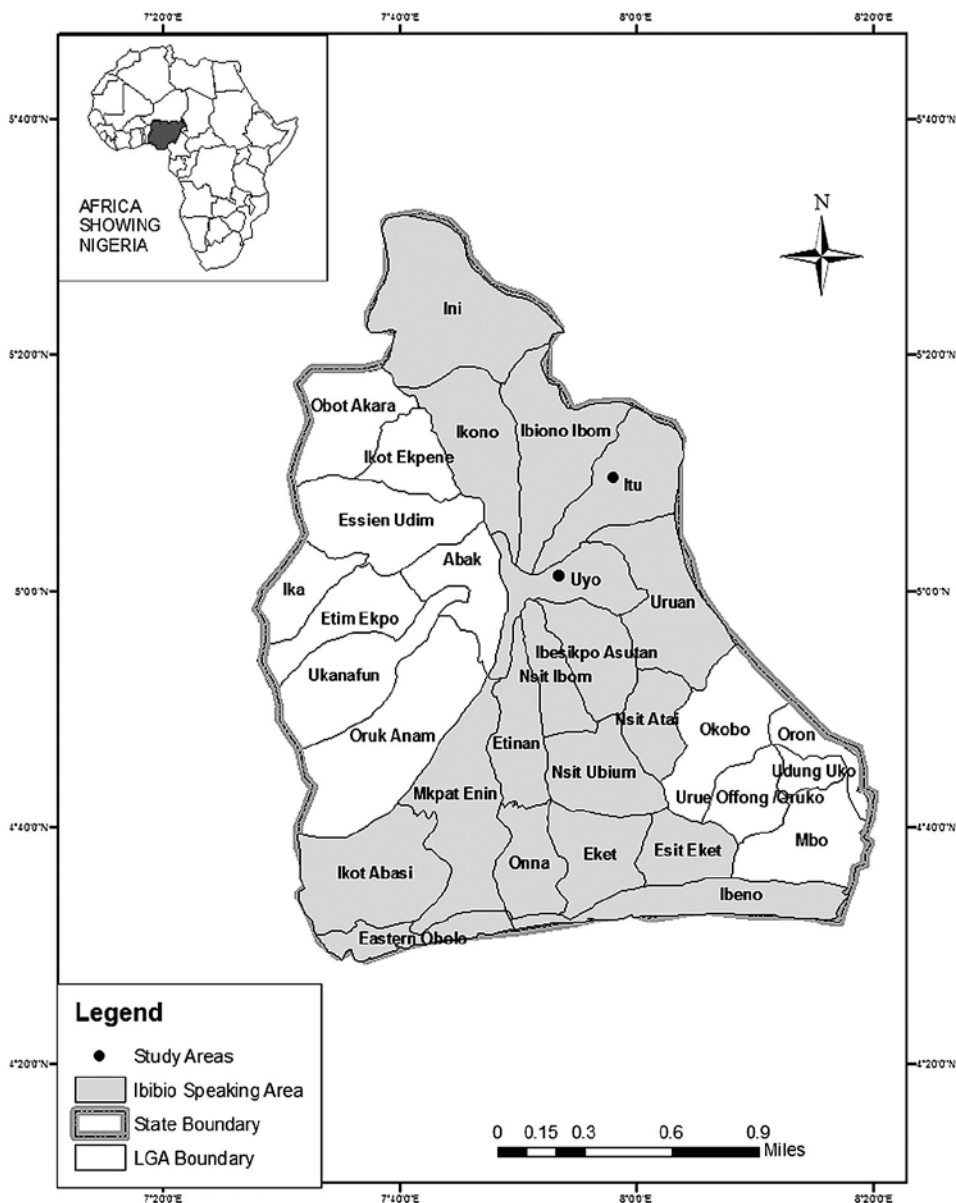
Figure 1: Map of the study area (Courtesy: Geography & Environmental Science Dept., UNICAL)

Ibibio personal naming system

Language mirrors society and Ibibio names are a reflection of who the Ibibio are as a people. This, in turn, is dependent on their religious and cultural beliefs, norms, values, ethics and worldview. John (2000) points out that like most traditional African people, the Ibibio view the universe as circumcentric and multidimensional, and perceived the world as "boundless" in spatial terms with an ordered mutually interdependent and ontological fused planes of the deities, ancestors and mythological beings. A presentation of some social categories of Ibibio names shows the socio-cultural influence of Ibibio traditionality on its personal names:

Table 1: Social categories of personal names

Social category	Personal names
The supreme God	Nsèobót, Nsèabàsì, Ábàsìódù
Clan or group deities	Ábàsìattái, Áwáitám, Átákpọ
War societies	Ékoñ, Ótúèkọñ, Usenekọñ
Traditional medicine societies	Ídiọñ, Ìkwàíbòm, Akpámbañ
Inam society	Èkùkinàm, Nkántá, Nkénañ
Death prevention	Ndáráké, Ndáttá, Mkpánám

The Ibibio naming practice also portrays other aspects of its people's social and economic lives. Their sense of community and value for family relations are conveyed in names like *Ówóédinié* (people are wealth), *Ówó* (people), *Údìm* (multitude) and *Ùnánàòwò* – lack of people. Farming, fishing, hunting, trading and other traditional occupations of the people facilitated by the natural environment also form themes in the Ibibio naming system. Such names include *Úsọ/Òdòm* (blacksmith), *Odió* (dancer), *Ọdiọñ* (mender), *Ótóp* (hunter), *Ọkọ* (fisherman), *Ékọñ ùdọk* (carpenter), *Ànyàm ùrùà* (trader) and *Ínwáñ* (farm).

Some Ibibio names denoting places may also represent unexpected or accidental locations of birth, for example, *Úsúñ úrùà* (market route), *Úsúñ idìm* (stream road).

Strikingly similar to the traditional occupations' names is the recognition of geographical features as essential sources of Ibibio names: *Ésit íkọt* (interior of a bush), *Ákài* (forest), *Ékárìkà* (harmattan), *Ìnyàñ* (river), *Óbót* (mountain), *Útin* (sun), and *Édim* (rain) etc. With this act of naming based on these resources the people seem to have close ties with their geographic environment which they exploit for some economic benefits. Children may also be named according to their order of birth within a family (Table 2).

Table 2: Names according to order of birth

Order of birth	Male	Female
First	Ákpán	Ádiáhá
Second	Údọ	Nwà
Third	Údọ - údọ	Ètùkáfiá
Fourth	Ètokúdọ	Únwanwà
Fifth	Údọfiá	

This order varies depending on the people involved; this is however what was obtained in the area the study covered. Ibibio names also carry both positive and negative emotions; *Ídárá* (joy)*, Ìnèmèsit* (happiness)*, Èmèm* (peace)*, Ímá* (love)*, Ímé* (patience) etc. are positive emotion names. They connote positive feelings and desirable qualities and are believed to have effect on the psychological development of the name bearer. Names like *Úfip* (jealousy), *Ùkùt* (sorrow), *Ésùené* (disgrace), *Úbiák* (pain), *Ùsùà* (hatred) etc. reflect negative emotions. These names are responses to bitter experiences or unfavourable circumstances within the social environment. The time of birth can also determine a name that is given to that child. For instance, a child born at night is called *Ókón* (*Ákòn* or *Ókónanwan* for female).

There is asymmetric pattern in the naming practice of the people given the influence of English names. Names like *Édémsòn*, *Ókónsòn*, *Ékérésòn*, *Ídémsòn* and *Úduáksòn* etc. (which are derived from names like *Édèm*, *Ókón*, *Ékéré*, *Ídèm* and *Úduák* respectively). These names are modelled after English names like Wilson (son of William), Jefferson (son of Jeffrey), Edson (son of Edward) etc. In Ibibio, however, these names are merely onomastic innovation with no reference to rootedness or connectedness. This kind of linguistic manipulation of names has not been found amongst Ibibio death prevention names.

Some formal distinctions between Ibibio death prevention names and ordinary names

Death prevention names are given to children who undergo cycles of death and rebirth within the same family. The phenomenon is generally known as *Ésén émànà* (strange birth) among the Ibibio. Such children are usually given disgraceful names that portray them to the underworld spirits as worthless and unwanted by the biological parents or name givers. In this regard, the name is believed to hide the identity of the name bearer from the pernicious influence of the underworld forces. These spiritual forces are believed to control the destiny of the reincarnated child, including his right to live. The adoption of death prevention names, therefore, is a subtle psychology to deceive the underworld forces in order to disentangle the fragile children for their harmful influence and allowed to live. These names are pointers to the Ibibio social universe and cultural experience, reflecting their indigenous values, belief system, attitude and emotion (Mensah 2013b). On the surface, it may seem that these names do have the same formal structural properties, in common with the ordinary Ibibio names, apart from being distinguished by their referential contents. In the following discussion, we highlight some of the structural peculiarities of Ibibio death prevention names in contrast to the ordinary names, which contribute to their distinctiveness.

There are certain social categories in which ordinary Ibibio names may be divided into, for instance, distinction in sex, *Ókón* vs *Ókónànwàn*, *Étìm* vs *Átìm, Éfioñ* vs *Afioñ* etc. which involves the suffixation or alternation of initial vowels of male names to derive the corresponding female counterpart. This kind of sex differentiation in names can hardly be found in death prevention names, in which any sex can bear any name. The only instance of gendering is where a female name like *Èkàeté* (father's mum) is given to a male child to give the impression that such a child is not desired, while invariably he is most needed given the patriarchal nature of the Ibibio society in which preference for male children is a long-standing tradition.

There is also the case of phonological differential in Ibibio ordinary names, which is a direct reflection of status differential given the class system of the people in their social organisation. Mensah (2009) sees this twist as a form of Anglicisation of indigenous African names which the colonial administrators and missionaries handed down to the coastal south-eastern people of Nigeria (Table 3). A high-low tone combination realised on a sequence of syllables automatically depicts a high social status while a high-high tone combination represents a low or inferior status.

Table 3: Anglicisation of indigenous African names

Ibibio names	Anglicised form	Phonetic representation	Gloss
ófióñ	óffiòng	[ofiɔŋ]	moon
ésién	éssièn	[esien]	strange
ńyóñ	ńyòng	[nɔŋ]	wandering

For example, if a professor and his driver are namesakes, Ibibio society refers to the man that has power and influence with the HL tone adaptation while the powerless one answer the HH tone combination irrespective of their referential contents and meaning. Conversely, Ibibio death prevention names do not have graded variety of the same name that indexes power relation. All such names are equal in social status.

Importantly, ordinary names in Ibibio may conform to the order of birth within a particular family as we can see in Table 2. In this respect, names can be used as an index of measuring seniority among children within the same family. Closely related to this taxonomic pattern is the practice of naming first sons through a process of reduplication of their fathers' names. Names such as Ókókón, Ététìm, Éféfioñ etc. are correspondingly derived from Ókón, Étim and Éfioñ. This kind of symmetry cannot be established with the death prevention names which primarily function to facilitate essentialised existence.

The structure of Ibibio death prevention names

Ibibio death prevention names can be examined also from the aspect of their morphological and syntactic structures. These names range from simple lexical items (words) to complex sentences and provide a window to the grammatical structure of the Ibibio language. Death prevention names do not have any formal properties in common, as distinct from ordinary names. It is only in terms of their referential contents that they can be distinguished.

At the level of the lexicon, these names are primarily nouns and a few are adjectives as the data in Tables 4 and 5 show. A number of morphological processes are prevalent in Ibibio death prevention names. One of the most visible of these is nominalisation and adjectivisation of verbs as we can see below.

Table 4: Noun names

Underlying verb	Meaning	Derived name (noun)	Meaning
bi̧ǫñǫ	obstruct	ú-bi̧ǫñǫ	obstruction
sémé	lament	é-sémé	lamentation
dómó	tempt	í-dómó	temptation
wà	sacrifice	ú-wà	sacrifice
búéné	be poor	ú-búéne	poverty
sáñá	walk	í-sáñ	journey

Table 5: Adjective names

Underlying verb	Meaning	Derived name (adjective)	Meaning
táhá	be spoilt	ñ-táhá	spoilt
kárí	be tricky	ñ-kárí	tricky
bàk	be wicked	ì-bàk	wicked
múhǫ	be short	í-múk	short
diók	be bad	í-diók	bad
fíá	be white	á-fíá	whiter

The examples in Tables 4 and 5 are instances of lexical nominalisation and adjectivisation respectively, where the noun and adjective names are derived from verbs. The derived forms have meanings that are related to the same sense of the underlying verbs. We can make some generalisations about the morphological behaviour of the prefixes that motivate these processes. First, they are all derivational by virtue of giving extra morphological information and having varying distribution from their source verbs. They convert the source verbs into the nouns in Table 1 and into the adjectives in Table 5. The relationship between the prefixes and their stems is governed by the principle of vowel harmony and phonological conditioning of allomorphs. This evidence leads us to conclude that the formation of nouns and adjectives by the attachment of these prefixes goes beyond affixation. It involves the deletion or insertion of sounds as the case may be (Table 6).

Table 6: Attachment of prefixes

(a)	sáñá	walk
	í-sàñ	a journey
(b)	múhó	be short
	í-múk	short

The nominalisation and adjectivation processes in Table 6 (a) and (b) respectively are phonologically well-motivated as (a) it involves the deletion of the final vowel of the source verb, which also affects the change in tone of the derived structure from that of the underlying structure from high to low in the final syllable. In (b), it has affected a change

from a glotallised consonant to a velarised consonant in the coda position to meet the phonotactic constraint of Ibibio consonants. There is also a loss of the final syllable of the underlying verb in the derived structure as a consequence of this change.

Another morphological process that is prevalent in Ibibio death prevention onomasticon is compounding as we can see in Table 7.

Table 7: Compounding of names

Compound structure	Meaning
úrúk-ikòt (rope + bush)	snake
ḿkpá-etò (bark + tree)	bark
ǹtùen-íbòk (pepper + charm)	alligator pepper
ọ̀kpọ̀rọ̀-ísìp (nut + kernel)	palm kernel

The various instantiations of compounding in Table 7 reveal some structural peculiarities of Ibibio death prevention names. *Úrúk-ik*ò*t* (snake) is an example of exocentric compound, which is headless. In other words, none of the constituents of this compound can function as a semantic head. This kind of compound expression lacks semantic compositionality and is characterised by what Katamba (1993) calls "semantic opaqueness". This implies that the meaning of the whole form is not predictable from the meaning of the constituent parts. Other examples of compounding in Table 7 are endocentric, which are headed in terms of the head-modifier relationship. The head is the dominant constituent of the entire compound word syntactically. The non-head component functions as the modifier of the head that specifies its meaning precisely. Spencer (1991) argues that the modifier element functions to attribute a property to the head much like the functions of an attributive adjective.

Semantically, endocentric compounds are transparent in nature in that the meaning of the component lexical items sums up the meaning of the entire compound words. They are more predictable than the exocentric compounds.

The study also identifies the predominance of noun phrases in the anthroponymic lexicon of Ibibio death prevention names (Table 8).

Table 8: Noun phrases in names

(a)	Á-má-ḿkpá	
	3SG-love-death	
	'A lover of death'	
(b)	Ḿbárá íkìd	
	nail tortoise	
	'nail(s) of a tortoise'	
(c)	Ínuà éyèn	
	mouth child	
	'The mouth of a child'	
(d)	Ákán èrèn	
	old man	
	'An old man'	

These noun phrases vary structurally: name (a) displays the agglutinative structure of the Ibibio morphology. The head noun *ḿkpá* (death) manifests concord with the verb *má* – love and the personal pronoun, *á-*. The agentive prefix takes the verb stem which it harmonises with its containing syllabic vowel. It functions the same way as the *–er* suffix in English. The constituents of this phrase are the modifier (prefix + verb) and the head noun. The modifier precedes the head. This evidence reveals that Ibibio is a head-last language. The NP structures in names (b) and (c) also contain nominal modifiers, which are followed by the head nouns. They constitute the genitive (possessive) NPs, or what may be translated as the free genitives or of-genitives in English. The NPs in names (b) and (c) can also be interpreted as the construct of the 's genitive in English, example, the tortoise' nail or the child's mouth. The NP in name d has a simple MOD + H structure of an adjective (modifier) which functions attributively to assign a property to the head noun.

At the level of the sentence, Ibibio death prevention names display a wide variety of structural types and functions taking into account both simplex and complex classes. A simple sentence in Ibibio has the subject, verb, object (SVO) pattern. Ibibio sentences function basically as declarative, interrogative and imperative which correspondingly perform the semantic functions of statement, question and command. In the analysis that follows, we examine each of these categories categories and related semantic and syntactic classification of sentence types involving Ibibio death prevention names.

Names as statements

This name types are structurally sentences with the subject, verb and its complement (Table 9).

Table 9: Sentence names

(a)	Úwém é-di ímọ́. Life 3SG-is wealth. 'Life is wealth.'
(b)	Ń-kèrè úwém 1SG-call life. 'I am called life.
(c)	É-má ḿfọ́n 3SG-like goodness They like (what is) good.

The names in Table 9 give information which are intended for the listener. This information is stated objectively as statements of fact or truth conditional. The constituents of the name a include the subject and the predicate. The subject is the noun phrase which is dominated by a noun, *úwém* (life). The predicate is more of the copular verb, which also carries a 3rd person subject /e-/. This reveals an instance of the presence of double subjects which is a syntactic requirement of Ibibio declarative and interrogative sentences. *Ímọ́* (wealth) functions as the complement of the verb. In names (b) and (c), the subject NPs are dominated by nominative personal pronouns which represent the 3rd and 1st persons respectively. *Mfọn* (goodness) and *úwém* (life) complement the verbs *má* (like) and *kéré* (call) respectively. From the pragmatic point of view, the examples (a) and (b) in Table 9 are used to depict the sanctity or value for life held among the Ibibio people. Living a healthy life is the greatest conception of wealth rather than the acquisition of material property. The Ibibio believe that life is sacred and should be valued above all things. The sentence name (c) in Table 9 also represents a cultural ideology of the Ibibio who wish good things for one another, their families and community.

The study also reveals a string of negative statement names in Ibibio death prevention anthroponyms. These names are usually identified by the introduction of the *ké* negative suffix to an affirmative or neutral statement (Table 10).

Table 10: Negative statement names

(a) Ń-dárá-ké	(b) Ń-sémé-ké	(c) Inì í-bóyó-ké
1SG-rejoice-Neg	1SG-lament-Neg	time 3SG- pass-Neg
'I do not rejoice'	'I do not lament'	'Time is not late'

The sentence names in Table 10 have the structure, subject, verb and negation marker. The subjects are nominative pronouns in names (a) and (b) while in (c) *ìnì* (time) is the emphasised subject while *I-* is the un-emphasised subject. The subject(s) and the finite verbs agree in number and person. The implication in these names is that they express conditions on which something else is contingent. For instance, the full cultural interpretation of a name like Ńdáráké is 'I do not rejoice until you live.' There is a conditional relationship that consists of two component propositions: the explicit antecedent and the implicit consequent. The two sets of proposition have separate core meaning and refer to separate sets of possibilities (Johnson-Laird and Byrne 2002). It is one's ethno-pragmatic competence that can facilitate the appropriate interpretation of these sentence names.

In name (c), the subject functions as the theme in terms of argument structure and expresses an action that is identified by the verb. The subject, however, has a hypothetical reference from a pragmatic point of view as it is not modified or its referent made known. One may wish to analyse this as a stylistic effect but it can however, lead to ambiguity. The name may also offer new expectations given the transcendence of time.

Names as commands

These are structurally imperative constructions which give order or command. They have no overt grammatical subject as the verb has the base form (Table 11).

Table 11: Command names

(a) Ńyéné imé	(b) Ńyéné imá	(c) Yámá
Have patience	have love	bright
'Be patient'	'Have love (for this child)'	'Be bright'

It has been argued (Ndimele 2003) that sentences of this kind have implicit subject in the surface structure which is usually represented by the second singular pronoun *Afo* (you). Further proof of this claim can be revealed in a reported speech (Table 12).

Table 12: Reported speech names

(a)	Ó-bò é-nié imé
	3SG- say 2SG-have ime
	'She/He says you should have patient'
b)	O-bo á-yámá
	3SG-say 2SG- bright
	'She/He says you should shine'

The evidence in Table 12 shows that imperative sentences in Ibibio have implicit subject which are usually nominative personal pronouns and which represent the second person singular. It also reveals that the verb roots have regular subject pronouns in the plural forms. The study also reveals the existence of commands with *let-equivalent* in Ibibio. This kind of command is used to express a suggestion, wish or desire (Mensah 2013a). It suggests a shared action by both speaker and addressee.

Table 13: Let command names

(a) É-yák ń-dúé	(b) É-yák è-nọ	(c) Ń-tié dó
3SG-let 1SG-offend	3SG-let 3SG-give	1SG-sit there
'Let me be guilty'	'Let us concede it'	'Let me be there'

Pragmatically, this kind of sentence pattern can be interpreted as a proposal for an action by the speaker since it contains a proposition in which no response is involved. In Ibibio, these sentences involved the 1st person singular and the 3rd person plural imperative, unlike in English where it is basically the first person inclusive imperative (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 936). The third kind of imperative in Ibibio is the negative imperative. This sentence has the negative prefix marker (which characteristically carries a rising tone) and the verb as the base (Table 14).

Table 14: Negative imperative names

(a) kûsák	(b) kûbiát	(c) kûfrě
Neg laugh	Neg destroy	Neg forget
'Do not laugh'	'Do not destroy'	'Do not forget'

These sentences do not have underlying subjects in their surface structures and like the positive imperative sentences, the second person plural is the implicit subject for such constructions. Comparing the structure of negative imperative to negative command in Ibibio, we discover that the negator of a command is a prefix /ku-/ with no explicit subject while that of a statement is a suffix /-ke/ with a cognate subject in the surface structure. This evidence reveals that negation in Ibibio is a highly morphosyntactic phenomenon.

Names as questions

Structurally, two types of questions or interrogative sentences can be found in Ibibio grammar, yes-no questions and wh-questions. Information on Ibibio death prevention names reveal the existence of only the wh-question type, which has the wh-operator at the beginning or end of the sentence (Table 15).

Table 15: Question names

(a) Ánié fọn?	(b) Ńsó íní? (Nsíní)	(c) Ú-béhe-dìé?
Who good	What time	2SG-bother-how
'Who is better'?	'What time?'	'How does it bother you?'

Naturally, questions are used to elicit new information but in the context of Ibibio names, they are generally directed at no one but are merely rhetorical with sufficient pragmatic information and the strong elocutionary force of an assertion with the opposite polarity from what is apparently being asked (Han 2002). In the Table 15 names (a) and (b), the wh-words and the predicators constitute the structure of the questions while in name

(c), the structure has a noun phrase represented by a second person singular prefix and the predicate. The wh-word is an external argument of the verb within the predicate in (a) and (b) and an internal argument in (c).

Names as serial verb constructions

From our data, we identify Ibibio names which are clearly serial verb constructions, where a simple name has two verbs with their corresponding nominalising prefixes (Table 16).

Table 16: Serial verb names

Ń-dóp ú-sé	(b) Ń-tím ú-sé
1SG-calm 1SG-watch	1SG- 1SG-watch
'I watch you calmly'	'I watch you closely'

The first verb in the series naturally indicates the inception phase of an event, while the second verb is the corresponding termination phase of the same event. There is no overt marker of co-ordination or subordination between the verbs. The two verbs profile a single process comprising two separate coded phases (Aikenvald 2003). They relate semantically and are understood as two phases of a unitary event. V1 naturally indicates the inception phase of the event while V2 corresponds to the termination phase of the same event. The two verbs in Table 16 do not have the same syntactic prominence. In name (a), for instance, the events in V1 are interpreted as occurring before those of V2, and V2 has greater prominence because V1 merely expresses the speaker's perspective since the *watching* is to be done where the speaker is present, physically or conceptually and not anywhere else (Nicolle 2007). In spite of the prominence of V2, it is V1 that can index grammatical categories like tense, aspect, negation, modality etc. For instance, the structure in Table 16 can be negated as follows (Table 17).

Table 17: Negated serial verb names

(a)	Ń-dóp-pó ú-sé
	1SG-calm NEG 1SG-watch
	'I do not watch you quietly'
(b)	Ń-tím-mé ú-sé
	1SG- care NEG 1SG-watch
	'I do not watch you closely'

This evidence also reveals that negation is Ibibio can be driven by phonological and syntactically constrained allomorphs. There is creation of additional syllable (triggered by negation) from the verb roots through a process of suffixation. The vowels of the root verbs harmonise with the vowels of the negative suffix while the verb roots' codas assimilate with the onset of the negative suffixes. These are all features of V1.

Names as cleft constructions

Clefting involves a bi-clausal expression in which the higher or matrix clause is the focused part of the sentence, and the subordinate clause is related. However, in Ibibio death prevention names, the noun phrase that constitutes the nominal clause and the "that-" in that clause are deleted (Table 18).

Table 18: Cleft constructions names

(a) Ó-tò únyimè	(b) Ó-tò ùkémé
3SG-come (from) agreement	3SG-come from ability
'It is from agreement'	'It is from (one's) ability'

The clefting strategy here simply involves the introduction of the cleft pronoun *ó* – which has a NP antecedent that is referential and not a dummy or semantically void as the case is in English. For instance in name (a) of Table 18, *tò únyimè (*come from agreement) is the predicative complement in the complex matrix clause. It modifies the foregrounded element and coindexes with the focused phrase. In terms of information structure, the cleft clause draws attention to the salient part of the sentence.

There are also cases of negative clefting in Ibibio names signalled by the introduction of the negative marker at the sentence final position (Table 19).

Table 19: Negative cleft constrictions names

(a)	Ìnì í-bóyó-ké
	Time 3SG-past NEG
	'It is not late'
(b)	Í-tó-hó ówó
	3SG-come from NEG person
	'It is not from man'
(c)	Í-dúọ́ họ́
	3SG-fall-NEG
	'It is not falling'

Negative clefting in Ibibio has the structure NP + verb + NEG + X, in which X could be a noun phrase or a prepositional phrase. In name (a) of Table 19, which shows both the emphasised subject *Ìnì* (time) and the un-emphasised subject *í* – it, the emphasised subject functions as the referential element and the focused part of the cleft while the un-emphasised subject acts as the cleft marker. However, in names (b) and (c), where the subject reference is superfluous, the un-emphasised subjects function as the NP antecedents. The NEG markers in 19 constitute part of the predicative phrases within the relative like-clause.

Names as conditional clauses

This kind of expression requires certain conditions or circumstances to be fulfilled if the action of the main verb can take place. Ibibio death prevention names furnish a few examples (Table 20).

Table 20: Conditional clause names

(a)	Í-kpí-dù- í-sé
	3PL ASP live 3PL-watch
	'If we live (long), we will see.'
(b)	É-kpé démé
	3SG ASP share
	'If it is shared.'
(c)	Ḿ-mé-é-yé yak
	COND ASP 3PL-FUT-allow
	'If they would allow (this child to live).'

The structures in Table 20 express factual implications or hypothetical situations and their consequences. They also describe real life situations. The conditional markers *kpí* and *kpé* in names a and b respectively are aspectual while *mé* in (c) is modal. They combine with the respective verbs *dù* (live), *démé* (share) and *yak* (allow), to signal the conditional mood. These conditional clauses have two possibilities, and their overall property is determined by the condition's tense and degree of realness.

Names as relative clauses

Ibibio death prevention names also function as subordinate clauses. They exhibit long distance dependency and particularise or describe nouns which are introduced by a zero relative (Table 21).

Table 21: Relative clause names

(a)	Á-má ítèm
	3SG-love advice
	'One who loves advice'
(b)	À-bàk é-dí
	3SG-be early 3SG- advice
	'One who arrives early'

The structures in Table 21 are reduced forms of Table 22, which have the same basic meaning.

Table 22: Reduced relative clause names

(a)	Ówó émí á-máá-há ítèm
	Person who 3SG-love-ES advice
	'One who loves advice'
(b)	Ówó émí á-bàk-ká é-dí
	person who 3SG-be early ES 3SG- come
	'One who arrives early'

The introduction of the relative pronoun *émí* (who), which yields implicitly in Table 21, performs two functions. First, it serves as a connector or coordinating conjunction linking the noun with the relative clause. The noun is pronominalised by *who*. It also functions as the subject of the relative clause. The relative clause post-modifies the noun and gives more information about it. The relativisation strategy Table 22 is the same though their internal structures are different. In name (a), *ítèm* (advice) functions as the direct object of the verb *má* (love). In other words, the verb carries a noun complement. In name (b), however, the verb *dí* (come) is a complement of another verb, *bàk* (be early) within the same relative clause. Names (a) and (b) are instances of restrictive relative clauses. They identify their nouns and establish some kind of contrasts. For example, name (a) presupposes that there were at least two people, one of which is identified as the one that loves advice. The same assumption holds for name (b) which indicates that one person arrived early in the midst of other people.

Conclusion

Death prevention names in Ibibio are pointers to the Ibibio socio-cultural experience and supernatural universe, which give deep insights into their cultural patterns, beliefs, language and spirituality. This study has investigated death prevention names in Ibibio cultural tradition from their structural perspectives. The Ibibio language is the source of these names; they are often formed by specific morphological and syntactic rules which may also trigger semantic and phonological information, and knowledge of these names is synonymous with knowledge of the grammar of Ibibio. The study discovers that the syntax of Ibibio death prevention names is open-ended and deeply versatile, since they are not restricted by any particular kind of structures. They also display formal structural characteristics in addition to their referential contents and metaphysical presuppositions which are distinguished from ordinary personal names in the Ibibio culture.

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Povzetek

Prispevek iz strukturalne perspektive preučuje imena za preprečevanje smrti med pripadniki Ibibio v jugovzhodni Nigeriji. Ibibio imena za preprečevanje smrti lahko ustvarjajo in vzdržujejo določeno raven zanesljivosti in varnosti, ki je bistvenega pomena za preživetje otroka , saj med ljudmi velja implicitna predpostavka, da pri tem delujejo duhovne sile neke vrste. Ljudje verjamejo, da ta imena poveže svoje nosilce z njihovo preteklostjo, predniki in duhovnostjo. Prispevek prikazuje, da ta imena pomenijo bogatitev skladenjske oblike, ki so okno do gramatičnih opisov v jeziku Ibibio. Njihova sintaksa ni omejena na zamejen nabor objektov, zaradi česar so strukturno vsestranski in odprti ter predstavljajo različne tipe in funkcije stavkov v jeziku Ibibio. Prispevek zaključuje, da imajo ta imena poleg referenčnih vsebin in metafizičnih predpostavk tudi formalne strukturne lastnosti, ki jih ločijo od navadnih imen Ibibio.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: osebna imena, reinkarnacija, kultura, antromorfizem, sintaksa, Ibibio

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