

Speaking Double: A Socio, Phonological and Semantic Analysis of Naming Twins in Botswana

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Abstract

The concept of naming twin children brings interesting dynamics in the Botswana culture, more so because twins were generally eliminated in pre-independence Botswana because of spiritual or cultural beliefs associated with them being ominous. Thus, how twin children are named in terms of the socio-economic situation at the time effectively creates a treasure trove of information for researchers. This paper deals with twin names of different genders in the Botswana context. Its focus is threefold. Firstly, it gives an anthropological background on twin births and their naming in the colonial era. Secondly, it establishes that the naming of twins is essentially a new occurrence in the Botswana society. Lastly, the paper also looks at twin names from a phonological perspective and establishes that there is a correlation between Setswana twin names of opposite genders and phonology. The paper is multi-faceted so it draws from approaches of socio-onomastics and the sociology of names which are loosely guided by social anthropological theories. The paper has revealed; i) distinct phonological qualities of female and male twin names; ii) several morphological processes employed in the creation of the names and; iii) the existence of gender stereotyping in the names.

Keywords: twins, onomastics, gender, phonology in naming, Semantics, Sociolinguistics

Introduction

This paper is in three parts. Firstly, it briefly makes a case for how the naming of twins in Africa is relatively a new phenomenon due to strong cultural beliefs that viewed such births as an abomination. Secondly, the paper will take a phonological look at the names. The aim is to establish the phonological patterns of names of twins of different genders. The third part will focus on the semantics of naming twins in Botswana.

Onomastics remains an interesting area for academic discourse because of its interdisciplinary nature. It touches on aspects as rich and as diverse as oral literature, gender, cultural philosophy and the politics of one's family history to mention a few. Norman (2003) states that a person's name is their identifier and is considered their most valuable possession because it is the only thing that can survive death so it is often very carefully chosen after considering a variety of factors. There are practices, particularly in the African context that illustrate that naming is more than just an appellation, but a characterisation, a socialisation and even a spiritualisation process that embodies all aspects of a person's being. For instance, Moyo (1996) asserts that the Ngoni-Tambuka speaking people of Northern Malawi have a preference for names that have historical importance like *Mapopa* (Wilderness- named after the death of several siblings). In another example, Makondo (2013:114) states that, 'The Angolan Ovimbundu women's names convey thought patterns of a people as in the name *Vihemba* that denotes a child whose birth was difficult and required the use of charms'. The study of names given to twins is interesting because there is available evidence that suggests that in the pre-colonial era, (or pre-Christian Africa) many African countries did not allow the birth of twins, let alone name them. The paper will attempt to explain why there is a general phobia regarding twins and the various omens such births portend. Considering the dearth of information regarding the naming of twins particularly in Botswana, this is an area that needs in-depth research.

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Background and Literature Review

Cultural beliefs and the plight of twins

A lot of literature in Africa abounds the subject of naming (Akinnaso 1980; Mathangwane and Gardner, 1999 and Rapoo 2002). These studies mostly focus on gender stereotypes surrounding naming and attitudes towards European and African names. However, not much has been done with regards to studying naming of twin children. Though names are generally given at birth, in Botswana there are exceptions. Van Wolputte (2011:70) states that among the Herero, the child is not named until the umbilical cord has fallen. It is only after the umbilical cord has fallen that it is believed that the child has been presented to the ancestors by the father. Prior to this, the child is simply labelled 'a small wild animal' known as an *okapuka*. Ledibane (2015:461) asserts that 'during the pre-colonial era, in African communities, names given to new born babies were determined by the events taking place before, during and after their period of birth'. For instance, a couple that has struggled to conceive may eventually name their child *Mpho*, meaning 'gift'. What needs to be noted is that naming among Botswana displayed an awareness of the existence of a higher order, even before the arrival of the missionaries (Bagwasi 2012 and Ledibane 2015). As such there are names such as *Goitsemodimo* 'God knows'. This, however, does not inform on how this influenced the naming of twins or if there was any special cognisance about this. It is worth noting that in some African cultures the killing of twins at birth was a routine occurrence for a variety of reasons (Granzberg, 1973; Milner 2000 and Marroquin 2017). One of the reasons as aforementioned was that the birth of twins was widely seen as an ill omen, therefore, issues of what to name twins became irrelevant. Marroquin (2017) posits that twins were seen as a sign that the gods or some spiritual being was angry at some transgression supposedly committed by the parents or the community. Twin children thus, came to be viewed with disgust and resentment primarily because of the strong cultural values that proclaimed such births as nothing short of taboo. Such killings involved the dumping of the children in the bush and leaving them at the mercy of nature. Cases of the killings of twins have been recorded amongst the !Kung of Botswana (Milner 2000). It must however, be stated that in this instance the killing of twins had little to do with spiritual concerns but more to do with the shortage of nutrition to support an extra mouth.

In some African cultures, the mothers were also punished through various means, from having their clothes torn to being driven out of the village in shame (Ejidike 1999; Livingstone 2012). The communities had no natural explanation as to why a woman gave birth to twins so the causes were always seen as a sign of deep transgression. For instance, there were cases among African cultures where twin births were believed to be a reflection of a woman having had an unnatural sexual encounter with an evil spirit (Livingstone 2012 and Imbua, 2013). This treatment of twins is also documented in written African literature texts such as Achebe's ground-breaking *Things Fall Apart* (1953). When the European missionaries arrived in Nigeria one of their objectives was to do away with twin killings. Bastian (2001:13) asserts that 'eradicating twin killing became one of the great mission causes in south eastern Nigeria from the late nineteenth century into the late 1930s'. Given that the practice of eliminating twins continued until the twentieth century, one can posit that the practice of naming twins in Africa, or at least in Botswana, is relatively new. One can further argue that the practice of naming single birth children is much older than that of naming twins and as such the practice of naming twins poses interesting linguistic and cultural questions. Since African societies in the era of pre-colonialism were patriarchal, it can be argued that the women did not have much of a say regarding their wish to keep the twins they had given birth to. What was evident is that the woman was more often than not blamed for the 'abomination' and bore the brunt of any repercussions for such a deed. Little if nothing is known about how Botswana mothers dealt with the issue of multiple births, although 'tales' have been told of some ethnic groups disposing of twins by placing them in a mortar (*kika*) and pounding them to death with a pestle. There are also common instances among the Botswana

where the twin babies were strangled at birth and it would be reported to the mother that she had a still birth. Bonnefoy (1993:158), states that generally in Southern Africa, ‘in the past, one of the children was put to death, as among the Zulu, the Tswana and the Kalanga’. Van Wolputte (2011:70), asserts that among the Himba of Namibia, ‘babies born in pairs were killed at birth. If it was a boy, the body was not buried but dried, ground up and kept in a bag inside the woman’s house’. Southhall (1972:81), further asserts that ‘the Tswana Hurutse and the Hottentots always buried alive the female of a mixed pair.’ All these further emphasise that the issue of what to name twins was never really considered amongst Africans given that it is only in the early twentieth century that the children have been allowed to live.

The naming of twins in Africa

Many previous studies (Akinnaso 1980; Mathangwane and Gardner 1999; Neethling 2005 and Pongweni 1983) have explored African personal names and the naming system itself but very few focused on the naming of twins. A previous study that discusses twin names in the African context is Guerini (2005) who reveals how the Akan society of Ghana names twin babies. She states that in the Akan society the birth of twin babies is a significant event that influences the naming of all the other children that are born after them.

The names of the twins would vary depending on the gender and the order of their birth. She states that the name of the twin who is born first would indicate that he/she is the elder one and that of the other one will indicate that he/she is the younger one. Similarly, the different genders will be indicated by the male and female affixes that will be attached to the names

Morpho-phonology of the names

While the present paper also looks at the creation of the names through affixation, it takes it further to include other strategies such as, diminutives, compounding, near synonymous words names and similar sounds names. It also looks at the phonological patterns of the names.

Affixation processes

Affixation is the process of attaching a morpheme to a word to form a different form of that word or to form a completely new word. Affixation can occur in two ways; prefixation, where a morpheme is attached at the beginning of an already existing word, for example: *ex-* (prefix) + *convict* (root) to give the word *ex-convict*. Secondly, this can be in the form of suffixation, where a morpheme is attached at the end of a word to give a new word or a different form of the word, for example: *employ* (root) + *-ment* (suffix) gives the word *employment*. Diminutives are smaller versions of linguistic forms which can also be formed through affixation.

Some Bantu languages, Setswana included, form diminutives of nouns by attaching the prefixes *-ana* (or *-ane*) and *-nyana* (or *-nyane*) to the root word. According to Cole (1955:105), the choice of the final vowel in the suffix does not appear to be governed by any rule because either *a* or *-e* can be used according to preference or dialectal usage. Cole further states that diminutives of nouns is used to indicate smallness in animals, especially with the suffix *-nyana* and it is also used to signify derogation or disparagement, with either suffix but more commonly with the suffix *-nyana*. For example *mpho* ‘gift’; *mphonyana* ‘small gift.’

Compounding combines two free morphemes to create a noun, a verb or an adjective. Compounds, therefore, are two independent words put together to produce a new word with a new meaning. According to Yule (1985), compounding is a very productive source of new words in most languages. Compounding as a name creation strategy is common in most languages of the Bantu group especially Setswana and Sesotho. This is usually where the name is formed by attaching a gender indicative prefix to the base form

of the noun as in *Mmapula* - *Mma* ‘Miss/mother of’ + *Pula* ‘rain’ or *Rrapula* (*Rapula*)– *Rra* ‘Mr/ father of’+ *pula* ‘rain’. The gender prefixes *Rra* and *Mma* indicate masculinity and femininity respectively and in such names they may not necessarily mean *father* or *mother*. Mojapelo (2009) observes the same strategy is prevalent in name creation amongst Southern Sotho names.

Semantic and phonological properties

The near synonyms strategy looks at names that have exactly or nearly the same meaning such as *Loago* and *Boago*, both which mean a building. The other strategy of twin names formation is the use of words with similar sounds such as in the names, *Kutlo* ‘hearing/ obedience’ and *Thuto* ‘education’ where the final vowels /o/ and /o/ rhyme.

The last strategy that is evident in the data is where words are pluralised to form names. Pluralization is an action of expressing the plural form of a word which may be effected differently across languages. Each noun in Setswana belongs to a class which is identified by a certain noun prefix; hence these classes are referred to as noun class prefixes. Singular prefixes have corresponding plural prefixes which all nouns adopt. The noun class prefix, therefore, determines corresponding pronouns for nouns and indicates singular and plural forms of nouns. There are nine Setswana noun class prefixes, one sub-class, and corresponding plural classes into which all nouns in the language fall. For example, the singular prefix for Class 2 is *mo-* and the plural prefix is *me-* and in this class we find nouns such as *motse* ‘village’- *me-tse* ‘villages’ and *moraka* ‘cattle-post’- *meraka* ‘cattle-posts’. Similarly names that are formed through pluralisation take this form, the first one takes the singular form of the noun and the second one takes its plural form. Previous studies have shown that there is a correlation between phonological patterns and the gender of names (Culter *et al.* 1990; He 2020; Wing Yan Wong and Kang 2019). These studies reported that on average female names have more syllables, more front vowels (/i, ε/) and less back vowels (/u,ɔ/) while male names exhibit the opposite tendencies. In light of the findings the phonological elements that the current study examined are the number of syllables, front vowels and back vowels in Setswana male and female twin names. Setswana has seven basic vowels (/i, i, ε, a, ɔ, ʊ, u/), spelt orthographically as /i, u, e, a, o, ê, ô/ respectively. Recent literature does not conform to the use of the circumflex thus causing confusion between /ɪ/ and /ε/ as well as between /ʊ/ and /ɔ/ (Le Roux 2012 and University of Botswana 2001). Setswana has an open syllable structure (V,CV) language. It should be noted that Setswana has syllabic consonants which involve nasals and liquids (University of Botswana 2001).

Semantic categorisation of names and gender stereotyping

This paper also looks at the semantic categories of the names and the influence of gender stereotyping in the way the names are assigned. Many African societies, including the Botswana one were in the past strongly patriarchal, traces of which still exist today. According to Tlou and Campbell (1997:117) , in the past, ‘women were not allowed to attend the *kgotla* ‘traditional meeting place’, had no rights of public speech; nor could they enter the cattle kraal, herd or milk cattle.’ These cultural activities were reserved for men only. Rapoo (2003) looked at naming practices and gender bias in Setswana and concluded that the Setswana language displayed gender bias through its naming practices, which tended to favour the male over the female. Similarly, Onukawa (2000), has established that amongst the Igbo community society of Nigeria, male names are associated with qualities of importance, physical strength while female names are linked to qualities of beauty and other physical qualities that are not generally regarded as important. Furthermore, Gardner (1994:104), states that the male-female differences in name giving is common in onomastic studies, especially in patriarchal societies. She argues that males are given names that continue the family name and traditions while females get those that reflect their attractiveness and suggest change for a better life. The previous studies discussed above, (Gardner 1994; Onukawa 2000 and Rapoo 2003),

focused on single child names and not on twin names and it is against this backdrop that the current study intends to further explore twin names to establish if they present the same scenario as revealed by Rapoo (2003), particularly for Setswana names. Twin names are interesting because they are of children born at almost the same time and assumingly under the same circumstances, what would differentiate them is their gender, so the interest of this paper is to establish what influences the giving of each name and possibly reveal other interesting patterns presented by the names.

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

The data for this paper was collected through the researchers' contacts physically and through WhatsApp texts over a period of a year, from January 2019 to January 2020. The respondents were asked to provide the researchers with Setswana names of twin babies of different genders, it was emphasized that they should provide only names of twin babies that exist and not their own creations. They were also asked to provide the approximate age range of the twins. From this process 66 pairs of names were collected and they are the ones used in the study.

The names were phonologically transcribed in line with the International Phonetic Alphabet for Setswana (University of Botswana 2001) to represent their constituent phonemes. The frequency of each phonological element analysed were calculated to determine if the naming patterns of Botswana twin names adhere to the norm or if there are some cross linguistic differences.

Naming and the societies in which names exist heavily influence each other and so the two cannot be dealt with in isolation. It is for this reason that the study of names has always relied heavily on theories such as that of Sociolinguistics which is an interdisciplinary field that draws from linguistic, anthropological and sociological theories and methods (De Stefani 2016). Sociolinguistics was pioneered by William Labov in the early 1960's and has since become a solid platform through which the relationships of languages and societies are interrogated. Onomastics have incorporated sociolinguistic and sociological methods in the investigation of names which has resulted in the fields of socio-onomastics and the sociology of names, both of which are drawn upon in this study. According to De Stefani (2016), both these approaches address names within the context of society so they are viewed as relevant to the current study. Socio-onomastics uses sociolinguistic research methods such as interviews, questionnaires and focus group discussions. De Stefani states that onomastics describes name usage with respect to previously defined social categories such as male, female, young, native and migrants. The current study analyses names according to gender and uses similar research methods which are in line with those of socio-onomastics. The sociology of names on the other hand addresses larger societal questions which may arise from language and cultural contacts. This paper discusses the naming of twin babies in Botswana which is a fairly recent phenomena and could have come around as a result of language and cultural contacts. As previously stated the naming of twins in the African contexts is traced from the beginning of the 20th century onwards. Existing literature indicates that in the pre-colonial era twins were considered evil beings that were killed immediately after birth so they were literally non-existent and so were their names. The acceptance and embracing of twins could have eventually come about as a result of language and cultural contact of societies. It is for this reason that the field of sociology of names is also deemed relevant to this paper and is therefore drawn upon.

Results and Discussion: Name Creation Strategies

This section presents and discusses the different strategies that are employed in the creation of twin names as illustrated in the data. This discussion will be followed by the phonological discussion.

Diminutive strategy

Table 1 below indicates how the strategy of diminution is used to create twin names for boys and girls in Setswana language. The data indicates that the name of the girl child is formed by attaching a diminutive suffix to that of the boy child. The names above indicate that boy children are assigned names derived from the original form of the nouns such as *Mpho* ‘gift’ or *Lesedi* ‘light’ whereas girls get names that are diminutive forms of the boys’ names. The diminutive forms of these names are *Mphonyana* ‘small gift’ and *Lesedinayana* ‘small light’ respectively and these are given to female children. This data indicates that the creation of names by adding the diminutive suffix to the base form of the word is a strategy that is generally common with female names rather than with male names. This could be because in most languages it seems easier to suffix feminine names than masculine ones. Hough (2000) observed with English names that there is a higher frequency of suffixes attached to feminine names as compared to masculine ones.

Table 1: Diminution Strategy

Name: male	Phonological transcription	Gloss	Name: female	Phonological transcription	Gloss
<i>Mpho</i>	mp ^h o	‘gift’	<i>Mphonyana</i>	mp ^h oɲana	‘small gift’
<i>Lesedi</i>	lɪsɛli	‘light’	<i>Lesedinayana</i>	lɪsɛliɲana	‘small light’
<i>Babedi</i>	babeli	‘two’	<i>Babedinyana</i>	babeliɲana	‘small two’
<i>Nko</i>	nku	‘nose’	<i>Nkonyane</i>	nkuɲana	‘small nose’
<i>Masego</i>	masɪɣo	‘blessings’	<i>Masegonyana</i>	masɪɣoɲana	‘small blessings’

Compounding strategy

The compounding strategy that is evident in the current data is different from the one discussed in the literature review that Mojapelo (2009) has observed with Sotho names. The one in the current data does not use prefixation but it co-joins two names to create a complete clause or sentence with a complete meaning. Table 2 below illustrates that the first pair of names is *Abale* ‘count them’ and *Masego* ‘blessings’, when the two names are put together they give the expression, ‘count blessings’ which is a meaningful expression derived from the Holy Bible which means that ‘one should always count their blessings’. The second pair is made up of the names; *Thapelo* ‘prayer’ and *Yamorena* ‘of the Lord’, together give the expression *thapelo ya Morena* ‘the Lord’s prayer’. Other names make expressions like *leruo-larona* which means ‘our livestock’ and *thobo e ntle* which means ‘a beautiful yield or harvest’. The data indicates that the male name is usually the one that comes first in the expression followed by the female name.

Table 2: Compounding Strategy

Name: Male	Phonological transcription	Gloss	Name: Female	Phonological transcription	Gloss
<i>Abale</i>	abale	‘count them’	<i>Masego</i>	masɪɣo	‘luck/blessings’
<i>Thapelo</i>	t ^h apelo	‘prayer’	<i>Yamorena</i>	jamorena	‘of the Lord’
<i>Leruo</i>	lɪruo	‘livestock’	<i>Larona</i>	larona	‘it is ours’
<i>Setso</i>	setsɔ	‘culture’	<i>Sarona</i>	sarona	‘it is ours’
<i>Tumelo</i>	tumelo	‘faith’	<i>Yame</i>	jami	‘mine’
<i>Thobo</i>	t ^h obo	‘yield/harvest’	<i>Entle</i>	intlɛ	‘it is beautiful’

Near synonymous words strategy

The pairs of names in Table 3 below derive from the same or different root words but have the same or nearly the same interpretation. For example, the names *Tshepo* ‘trust’ and *Tshepiso* ‘promise’ both derive from the root word ‘tshepo/tshepho’ and have nearly the same meaning of trusting and promising. The names *Matlhogonolo* ‘luck’ and *Masego* ‘luck/blessings’ derive from different root words but mean the same thing.

Table 3: Near Synonymous Words Names

Name: Male	Phonological transcription	Gloss	Name: Female	Phonological transcription	Gloss
<i>Tlhomamo</i>	t ^h omamo	‘firmness’	<i>Tsepamo</i>	tsepamo	‘accuracy’
<i>Tshepo</i>	ts ^h epo	‘trust’	<i>Tshepiso</i>	ts ^h episo	‘promise’
<i>Pontsho</i>	ponts ^h o	‘revelation’	<i>Pono</i>	pono	‘sight’
<i>Matlhogonolo</i>	mat ^h oχolo	‘luck’	<i>Masego</i>	masiχo	‘luck/ blessings’
<i>Ateng</i>	atɪŋ	‘they are there’	<i>Agone</i>	aχɔne	‘they are there’
<i>Loago</i>	loaχɔ	‘building’	<i>Boago</i>	boaχɔ	‘building’

Similar sounds words strategy

Names in this category are paired on the basis of them having similar sounds. Table 4 below indicates that names in this category contain similar sounds and hence display qualities of general rhyme which shows that the names are purposely selected to be similar in one way or another. The pairs of names *Kealeboga* ‘I am thankful’ - *Realeboga* ‘We are thankful’ and *Batlang* ‘seek’ and *Bakang* ‘praise’ indicate patterns of general rhyme where most syllables within the name share the place or manner of articulation.

Table 4: Similar Sounds Names

Name: male	Phonological transcription	Gloss	Name: female	Phonological transcription	Gloss
<i>Thuto</i>	t ^h uto	‘education’	<i>Kutlo</i>	kutlo	‘hearing/ obedience’
<i>Thuo</i>	t ^h uo	‘livestock rearing/ keeping’	<i>Thuso</i>	t ^h uso	‘help’
<i>Kealeboga</i>	kialeboχa	‘I am thankful’	<i>Realeboga</i>	rialebobχa	‘we are thankful’
<i>Batlang</i>	batlaŋ	‘seek’	<i>Bakang</i>	bakaŋ	‘praise’
<i>Loago</i>	loaχɔ	‘building’	<i>Boago</i>	boaχɔ	‘building’

Pluralised words strategy

The data indicates that names that are created through this strategy are in such a way that the first name derives from the singular form of the word while the second name derives from the plural form of the word. Table 5 below presents examples of names that are formed in this way which include *Mpho* ‘gift’ which is given to the boy child and its plural form *Dimpho* ‘gifts’ which is given to the girl and *Setso* ‘culture’ and *Ditso* ‘cultures’, given to a boy and a girl respectively. The pluralisation of the female names could be because females, as child-bearing beings are associated with reproducing to multiply and this has extended to their individual names being viewed as such.

It should be noted that there may be other twin name categories which are not represented in the current data, therefore the categories discussed here are not exhaustive.

Table 5: Pluralised Words Names

Name: male	Phonological transcription	Gloss	Name: female	Phonological transcription	Gloss
Bongwe	bɔŋwɛ	‘one’	<i>Bobedi</i>	bɔbɛli	‘two’
<i>Lesego</i>	lɪsɪχɔ	‘luck/blessing’	<i>Masego</i>	masɪχɔ	‘blessings’
<i>Mpho</i>	mpʰɔ	‘gift’	<i>Dimpho</i>	limpʰɔ	‘gifts’
<i>Setso</i>	setsɔ	‘culture’	<i>Ditso</i>	litsɔ	‘cultures’

Results and Discussion

General findings on naming of twins

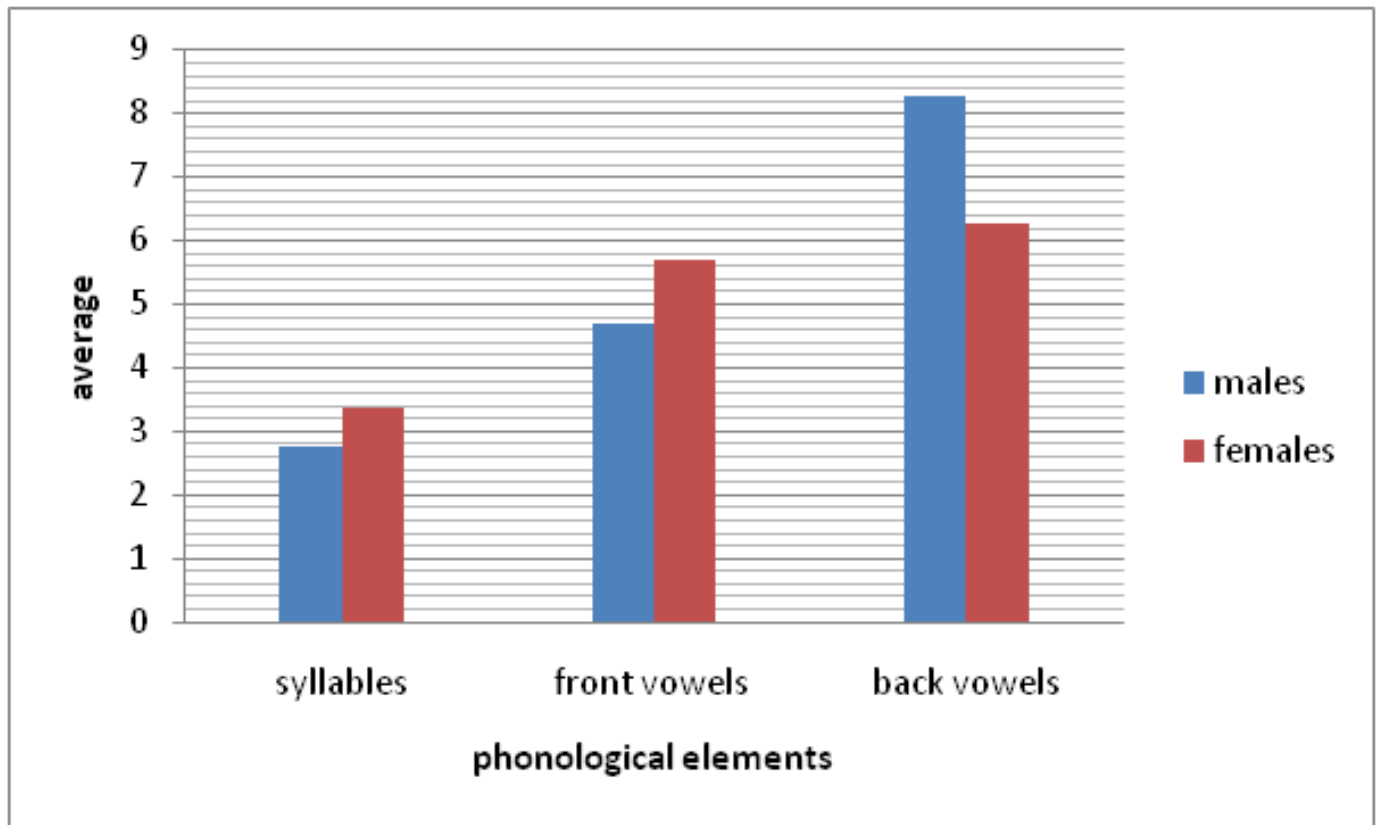
The study reveals that male and female twin names differ in terms of the number of syllables that they carry as well as the type of vowels the names have. It also establishes that there are different strategies that are employed to create the names, and these include compounding, diminutive, similar sounds words and others.

These strategies seem to be very much linked to the gender of the names and they are employed deliberately to achieve specific names with specific meanings. Setswana twin names are purposely crafted to achieve the desired names with specific motivations. From a semantic point of view the study reveals the existence of gender stereotyping in the names which is most common with traditionally patriarchal societies such as the Botswana one.

Phonological patterns

This section makes reference to Tables 1-7. The phonological analysis results replicated those of previous studies (Culter *et al.* 1990; He 2020; Wing Yan Wong and Kang 2019). On average, female names have 54 % more syllables than male names which have 46%. Moreover, female names have a preference for front vowels 55% on average while back vowels are prevalent in male names at an average of 57%. The results are clearly illustrated in figure 1 below:

Figure 1: Phonological Elements in Male and Female Twin Name



The results indicate that three syllable names are the most frequent in Setswana twin names; the least being the four syllable names. None of the names are monosyllabic. Less syllables, two and three syllables are more frequent in male names while more syllables, four and five syllables are predominant in female names (see Table 6 below).

Table 6: Distribution of Syllables in the Male and Female Twin Names.

Syllables	2 syllables	3 syllables	4 syllables	5 syllables
Males	7	11	1	1
Females	4	9	3	5
Sum	11	20	4	6
Average	5.5	10	2	3

This finding is in contrast with He (2020) who reported that three syllables names were more frequent in female names. One possible reason for longer female twin names compared to male twin names could be that some of the female twin names are derived from their male twin names. For example the diminutives strategy *mpho*-gift (male), *mphonyana*-small gift (female) and the compound strategy *thapelo*-prayer (male), *yamorena*-of the lord (female). However, these make just a fraction of the total names in this study. The majority of the names are not derived from male names. Cutler *et al.* (1990)'s analysis of English male and female names also noted that while some female names are derived from male names most are not. It is not clear why female names have a tendency to be longer than male names

across cultures. For the present study it is probable that the tendency of derived female twin names to be longer than males were taken to mean that female twin names should be longer.

The bias towards back vowels and front vowels in male and female names respectively is attributed to human speech production (Pitcher *et al.* 2013). Large sounding phonemes such as the back vowels /ɔ, ʊ, u/ are frequent in male names while small sounding vowels like front vowels /i, ɪ, ε/ are predominant in female names (Cutler *et al.* 1990; Pitcher *et al.* 2013). Largeness and smallness are desirable qualities for males and females correspondingly. Taller, muscular men and smaller, slimmer women are considered attractive in the Western society (Pitcher *et al.* 2013). These perceived masculinity and femininity attributes determine the naming of a child. It is the desire of most parents to give their children names that adhere to the social and cultural norms because that might have a big influence in the child's success in the society. Parents will not want to give their boy child a small sounding name which may send a wrong message that he is small and weak because men are expected to be big and strong. However, the culture of the society plays a significant role in attaching meaning to the naming patterns. While slimmer women are considered attractive in the Western culture, in Setswana culture slightly big, curvy women are seen as attractive. The idea of smallness displayed in Setswana female twin names through the predominant use of front vowels could have something to do with age. Men generally prefer women younger than them. Therefore, smallness in Setswana culture might metaphorically mean that because women are younger, they are considered small and weak compared to their male counterparts. In addition smallness can be indicative of endearment or cherishment. The most frequent front vowel is the front mid vowel /ε/ at an average of 52% (see Table 7 below for the distributions of vowels in male and female twin names). Both genders have the same number of this vowel in their names. The least frequent vowel is the front tense vowel /i/ (16%) with the male names on the least side (1.8%). The front close lax vowel /ɪ/ is in the middle at an average of 32%. The back close lax vowel /ʊ/ has a high rate of incidence at 50 % on average. The back mid vowel follows at 32%. The back close tense vowel /u/ has a low rate of occurrence at 14% on average. The lax vowels, close lax vowel /ɪ/ and back close lax vowel /ʊ/ are predominant in female names even though the difference compared to male names is not that high. The tense vowels occurrence in female names is 15% while in male names is 11%. Therefore, female names prefer lax vowels compared to male names. Lax vowels are articulated with less muscular tension and are shorter compared to tense vowels. This finding is in line with Pitcher *et al.* (2013) who conclude that female names have a preference for small sounding phonemes. Hence, male twin names should be predominant in tense vowels (/i, u/) to indicate the idea of largeness. However, this is not quite the case because even though the frequency of tense vowels is more in male names (5%) the difference to female names (4%) is very small at 1%. In fact, overall, the tense vowels are the least frequent on average at 9% while lax vowels are at 26%. Of all the vowels the most frequently used vowel is the open vowel /a/ at 30%. It is predominant in female names at 20% on average than male names which are at 10%. The dominant open vowel /a/ in female names could be due to the female names exhibiting more syllables than male names. Pitcher *et al.* (2013) are of the view that the open vowel /a/ is a large sounding vowel; therefore, the expectation is that it should be frequent in male names. This disparity in Pitcher *et al.* (2013) and the present study findings emphasises the idea that the meaning attributed to the phonological patterns of names is culture specific.

Table 7 Distribution of Vowels in the Male and Female Twin Names.

Vowels								
Front vowels	Males	Females	back vowels	Males	Females	Open vowel	Males	Females
i	2	3	o	11	5	A	12	25
ɪ	4	6	u	10	12			
ε	8	8	u	4	2			
SUM	14	17	SUM	25	19	SUM	12	25
AVE	4.7	5.7	AVE	8.3	6.3	AVE	0.6	1.25

Semantic categories

In this section the names are categorised according to semantic categories to establish the correlation between the meanings of the names and the gender to which they are ascribed. This section also analyses the names for any gender stereotyping that is evident in the way the names are given. Previous studies such as Rapoo (2003), have established that the Setswana naming system is an example of how society uses language to legitimize gender inequalities between men and women.

This section therefore, interrogates two semantic categories that these names belong to, in order to establish if there are any patterns of gender stereotyping that they reflect. The two categories discussed here are the ones which most of the names in the current data fall into, notwithstanding that there may be other categories that are not currently represented by the data.

Physical features

The category of physical features embodies qualities of body size, physical strength and beauty as represented in the names to establish how they are used and the motivations behind the usage. The quality of physical strength is evident in the names and as previously stated the names are mostly borne by boys, as the quality is mainly associated with the male rather than the female. Rapoo (2003:41) noted this with regards to Setswana names, ‘girls are commonly given names that express an aesthetic reference while boys’ names depict power and intellect’. Furthermore, a similar trend was observed by Zuercher (2007), in Azerbaijan society (Turkish) where men’s names emphasise their public roles and leadership qualities while women’s names focus on physical attractiveness.

The current data indicates a similar trend with the names of twin children as indicated by the names; *Thito* (M) ‘tree stem’ and *Kala* (F) ‘tree branch’ belong to a male and a female respectively. The name, *Thito* means a tree stem which is naturally the strongest part of the tree because it holds the tree together and has the roots that gives the tree life, while the name *Kala* derives from the word making reference to a tree branch which is not as physically strong as a stem. This usage clearly indicates that boys are regarded as physically stronger than females and have the abilities to take responsibility and hold the family together as symbolised by the qualities of a tree stem. On one hand, the tree branch is the part that gives the tree leaves, flowers and fruits, which symbolise beauty and new creations. Women are generally regarded as beautiful beings who procreate and these are embodied in the connotations of the name *Kala*.

The next pair of names demonstrates how the idea of body size is reflected in the names as indicated by *Lefika* (M) ‘hillock’ and *Lejwana* (F) ‘small stone’. The name *Lefika* makes reference to a small hill which is bigger in size to a small stone (*Lejwana*), the former belongs to a male and the latter to a female.

The quality of being bigger in size is attributed to a male child while that of smallness is attributed to a female child. This quality is also indicated in names that are formed through the diminutive process such as *Lesedi* (M) ‘light’ and *Lesedinyana* (F) ‘small light’ and *Mpho* (M) ‘gift’ and *Mphonyana* (F) ‘small gift’ where the smaller version of the name is borne by the female child. Similarly, this is reflected in the phonological patterning of male and female names. Males are given low formant frequency, large sounding names while females are given the opposite because men are stereotypically stronger thus protectors whereas smaller, slimmer women are considered to be highly productive (Pitcher *et al.* 2013).

Traditional/ cultural stereotyping

Ramaeba (2019), argues that Setswana present-day names continue to reflect cultural and social practices or attitudes that are now outdated, especially in relation to gender imbalance stereotypes. Certain names in Setswana have always been male or female specific, mainly motivated by the fact that the activities or attributes associated with a particular name have always been deemed appropriate for a particular gender. Generally, names that make reference to the keeping of all livestock such as *Leruo* ‘livestock’ or cultural practices or status such as chieftainship like *Kgosi* ‘chief’ have always been male specific because these are practices that are considered the prerogative of males in societies. Similarly, names that make reference to beauty such as *Bontle* ‘beauty’ or home making like *Segametsi* ‘one who fetches water/ that which fetches water’ have always been female specific and it would be considered strange to give such names to males.

The current data of twin names reflects the same scenario, where certain names are only assigned to a specific gender. The data indicates that the twin names of *Leruo* ‘livestock’ and *Larona* ‘ours’ are assigned to a male and female respectively. These children are born at more or less the same time, under similar circumstances and the assumption is that either child could have been given either name because there is nothing in the lexical meaning of the names that is associated with either gender. However, this is not the case because of the existing cultural stereotypes that influence the naming process. Other examples that follow the same pattern are *Setso* ‘culture’ – *Sarona* ‘ours’ and *Losika* ‘family’ - *Loatile* ‘has multiplied’ which belong to males and females respectively. The current data is in line with what previous studies such as Rapoo (2003) and Onukawa (2000) have observed with gender stereotyping in Setswana and Igbo names respectively.

Conclusion

The present study has demonstrated a correlation between Setswana gender twin names, phonology and semantics. On average female twin names have more syllables, more front vowels and less back vowels. Female names have more syllables of four to five whereas male names have three syllables and less. The most frequent vowel is the mid vowel /a/ which is predominant in female names, this contradicts the findings of previous studies which have reported that it is dominant in male names because it is a large sounding phoneme. Therefore, while the findings of the present study replicates previous studies’ findings, it has demonstrated that the phonology of the language and the culture of the society play a dominant role in the phonological patterns of gender names, in this case, Setswana twin names. Even though the findings of the present study are in line with previous studies, a large scope of the study where interaction of interconnected aspects are explored is necessary.

The name creation strategies discussed in the study have illustrated that Setswana twin names are deliberately crafted because the intention is for them to reflect a certain kind of pattern, either of similar words or synonymous words. The motivation is to have some sort of pattern reflected by the names and to not have randomly given names. This study has further illustrated that Setswana twin names like other Setswana personal names reflect some underlying cultural stereotypes that associate certain names with a particular gender. This paper has outlined only two semantic categories reflected in the data and the in-

tension is to do the same study at a larger scale which would hopefully reveal more semantic categories and further reveal the relationships between the names and the ages of their bearers. The paper has further revealed that twin names in Botswana are heavily influenced by the society within which they exist, just like all other types of names. It should be highlighted that this is part of an ongoing broader study and the analysis and results presented here are therefore not exhaustive.

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