

ÓSÓSÒ PERSONAL NAMES: STRUCTURE AND MEANING

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Abstract

Our African forebearers treated names not just as a nomenclature but as statements deeply embedded into our cultural expressions of identity, belief, and social philosophy. However, globalisation, socio-cultural pressures, and migration to parts far from home are reducing the practice of naming of children with indigenous names among many Ósósò indigenes. This shift is assumed to be influenced by factors such as religion, modern trends, or a lack of knowledge of the structure and semantics of Ósósò names. This study addresses the second gap by examining the ethnolinguistic structure of personal names and naming practices among the Ósósò people of Edo State, Nigeria, with particular emphasis on their phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic properties. Grounded in Cognitive theory and Speech Act theory, the research explores how language reflects and shapes worldview through the act of naming. Using a qualitative ethnographic methodology, data were collected through interviews with 8 fathers and 8 mothers who have given names to children and grandchildren, and additional data were sourced from online and archival records. The study focuses on the sociocultural factors influencing name selection and analyzed 56 names across seven syntactic categories and seven semantic themes. The findings reveal that Ósósò names are grammatically complete, semantically rich, and culturally resonant. They are encoded with ethical values, spiritual beliefs, and communal memory. The study recommends that Ósósò indigenes establish forums and educational initiatives focused on anthroponymy, ensuring that naming remains a conscious, culturally grounded practice since revitalizing indigenous naming traditions is essential to sustaining linguistic heritage and reinforcing communal identity in this rapidly changing world.

Keywords: Personal names, Ósósò, Semantics, Syntax, Anthroponymy

1. Introduction

A name is a word or group of words by which an individual person, place or thing is identified and naming is a universal human practice, with its meanings, functions, and structures varying widely across cultures. Names have been studied both by philosophers, Anthropologists and Linguists. Scholars such as Algeo (1992) and Agyekum (2006) have argued that names are not arbitrary; they are embedded within phonological, morpho-syntax, and semantic systems that reflect the values and structures of the societies that produce them. In many African societies, names are not merely identifiers but carriers of history, philosophy, and communal identity. Among the Ósósò people of Edo State, Nigeria, naming is referred to as *Ìtòvànómòrè*, literally meaning ‘to give a child a name to ‘eat’, metaphorically conveying personal names as a source of permanence, nourishment, and existential significance; a linguistic vessel through which cultural values, spiritual beliefs, and social narratives are transmitted. A name is not simply bore, it is identified among others having ‘eaten’ an identity, a metaphor supporting Algeo’s (1992:728) position that “Indeed, a human being without a name would be socially and psychologically less than a full man”

Using a qualitative ethnographic methodology, the study draws on field interviews of parents and grandparents, and archival materials to examine the ritual of *Ìtòvànómòrè*, the formal naming ceremony held on the eighth day after birth. It analyzes names across seven syntactic categories and seven semantic themes to reveal an intricate interplay between linguistic form and cultural meaning. This work consequently unpacks the linguistic and cultural logic behind Ósósò naming practices and contributes to the growing body of scholarship on African onomastics, ultimately offering insights into how language functions as a tool of identity, memory, and social continuity. It also fills the gap of Ósósò anthroponymy in literature and makes available 56 Ósósò names to

indigenes who need resource materials on naming.

2. Literature Review

In African contexts, naming is often a deeply symbolic act. Croft (2009) asserts that names are symbols that facilitate identification and categorization of persons, places or objects. Beyond this, names also serve as a link between the socio-cultural location of bearer of a name and the symbolic linguistic components embedded in the name itself. Indeed, there is a lot in a name. Ogunwale (2012) states that Africans consider persons bearing a name as capable of manifesting the characteristics inherent in that names. Similarly, Odebode (2012) posits that names do not exist only to index a character, but they serve as vessels integrating part of the cultural heritage they transmit across generations. The name of a person or thing is part of the referent with which s/he or it is referred to. Agyekum (2006), in his study of Akan naming practices, emphasizes that names serve as narrative devices, encoding the circumstances of birth, parental aspirations, and ancestral memory while Machaba (2004) explores how names in Southern Africa reflect historical events, spiritual beliefs, and social hierarchies. Investigating the Socio-Linguistics implications of personal names in Eposi (2023) argues that a people's language is a manifestation and description of the complexity and various diversity typical of humans' way of life with naming systems serving as a key expression of cultural practices. Collectively, these works underscore the idea that African names are not merely identifiers but cultural texts, rich with meaning, purpose and heritage.

Recent scholarship has expanded the scope of African onomastics. Völkel, Ndlovu, and Nassenstein (2023) provide a comparative analysis of naming practices across several African languages, highlighting the interplay between linguistic structure and sociocultural meaning. Their work reveals that names often carry both denotative meanings (literal

translations) and connotative associations (emotional, spiritual, or historical resonances). For example, a name meaning “born during hardship” may evoke not only the conditions of birth but also a narrative of resilience and hope. Drawing from fieldwork on indigenous naming practices in Ósósò, the name Èvèshòsarimeh /èvéfòsàríme/ ‘God has remembered me’ exemplifies this duality, affirming the authors’ position and demonstrating how theory connects to real-world usage.

Colonialism and globalization have further complicated naming practices in Africa. Machaba (2004) observes that the coexistence of indigenous and Euro-Western names reflects a negotiation of identity within postcolonial contexts. Naming thus becomes a site of cultural tension, where individuals assert, adapt, or resist external influences. The African Renaissance movement has responded to this identity complexities by advocating for the reclamation of indigenous names as a form of cultural revival and resistance. Scholars such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o (1986) have argued that language, by extension, naming, is central to decolonization and the restoration of cultural dignity. The literature on African naming practices reveals a complex interplay of linguistic, cultural, and historical forces which scholars like Algeo (1992) Agyekum (2006), Obeng (2001), Mensah (2002) and Ogunwale (2012), among others, continue to champion.

This study of Ósósò names builds upon these foundations, seeking to illuminate the structural and semantic dimensions of naming within a specific linguistic and cultural context. It further foregrounds the fact that names are not static labels, but they are dynamic expressions of identity, memory, and lived experience.

3. Theoretical Framework

In the study of Ósósò names, a comprehensive theoretical framework must account for both the structural composition of names and the

semantic richness they carry since names are more than linguistic tags - they are conceptual tools that encode cultural knowledge, social values, and cognitive patterns. While traditional onomastics and semantics offer valuable insights into naming systems and meaning construction, this study adopts Cognitive Linguistics as its primary analytical lens alongside Speech Act theory. These choices are motivated by the need to explore how names in Ósósò reflect embodied experience, cultural metaphor, and conceptual organization.

Cognitive Linguistics, as developed by scholars such as George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980), George Lakoff (1987), Ronald Langacker (1991), and Leonard Talmy (2000), views language as an extension of human cognition. The theory posits that linguistic expressions, including names, are shaped by how speakers perceive, categorize, and make sense of the world. Meaning is not fixed or abstract; it is conceptual, experiential, and context dependent. This makes Cognitive Linguistics particularly suited to analyzing Ósósò names, which often encapsulate narratives, emotions, and culturally grounded metaphors.

Ósósò naming practices are deeply embedded in communal life, spiritual belief systems, and historical memory. Names frequently reflect birth circumstances, ancestral lineage, moral aspirations, or divine intervention. For example, a name given to a child born during hardship may metaphorically encode resilience or divine favor. These metaphorical mappings align with Conceptual Metaphor Theory, a core component of Cognitive Linguistics, which explains how abstract concepts (e.g., life, destiny, protection) are understood through more concrete domains (e.g., journey, warfare, shelter). Thus, Ósósò names are not arbitrary labels but metaphorical condensations of lived experience. Cognitive Linguistics emphasizes the role of embodiment, the idea that meaning arises from bodily and social experience. In Ósósò, names often emerge from events that are physically and emotionally significant:

childbirth, illness, recovery, migration, or spiritual encounters. These experiences are encoded in names through culturally salient imagery and metaphor. For instance, ‘*évéshokpámishíé /évéʃòkpameʃíe/*’ a name meaning “God has lifted me” may evoke both physical elevation and spiritual redemption, grounded in the speaker’s embodied understanding of relief and transcendence.

By adopting Cognitive Linguistics, this study moves beyond surface-level analysis to uncover the mental models, cultural scripts, and conceptual structures that inform *Ósósò* naming practices. It allows for an in-depth exploration of how names function as cognitive artifacts, tools for organizing experience, expressing identity, and transmitting cultural knowledge. This framework also accommodates the dynamic interplay between structure and meaning, showing how phonological form and semantic content co-evolve within a culturally situated cognitive system. Cognitive Linguistics, therefore, offers a robust and flexible framework for analyzing *Ósósò* names. It captures the richness of naming as a conceptual, cultural, and linguistic act, and provides the theoretical depth needed to engage with both the structural and symbolic dimensions of the data. This approach not only enhances the descriptive power of the study but also contributes to broader discussions on language, cognition, and identity in African linguistic contexts.

However, to fully capture the dynamic, performative, and socially embedded nature of naming in *Ósósò*, the study also adopts Speech Act Theory. Originally developed by J.L. Austin (1962) and later refined by John Searle (1969), Speech Act Theory posits that language is not solely a vehicle for conveying information but also a means of performing actions. Austin’s foundational insight that saying something can be tantamount to doing something revolutionized the philosophy of language. He distinguished between three dimensions of speech: the locutionary act (the actual utterance), the illocutionary act (the intended

function of the utterance), and the perlocutionary act (the effect on the listener). Searle expanded this framework by categorizing speech acts into five types: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives. Of particular relevance to this study is the declarative act, which brings about a change in social reality simply through its utterance. This holds appeal because naming constitutes a declarative act, thus, the adoption of Speech Act Theory is not merely a theoretical preference but a methodological imperative that enables the investigation of how naming in Ósósò functions as a site of linguistic performance, cultural expression, and social transformation.

4. Methodology

This research employs a qualitative ethnolinguistic approach to investigate the structure and meaning of personal names within the Ósósò community. A sample of 56 commonly used names was randomly selected to ensure representativeness and diversity. The choice of methodology is guided by the nature of the subject matter because naming practices are deeply embedded in cultural experience, oral tradition, and social interaction. As such, the study prioritizes interpretive depth over numerical generalization, aiming to uncover the layers of meaning that names carry within their linguistic form and cultural function in Ósósò.

Fieldwork was conducted in Ósósò, a community in Edo State, Nigeria, known for its rich linguistic heritage and enduring cultural traditions. The data collection process spanned several weeks and involved multiple strategies to ensure both breadth and depth of insight. Semi-structured interviews were held with sixteen participants using Key Informant Interview strategy and a focus group discussion. Some of the data are among the online collections of documentation of Ósósò language and Ovbiko initiation rite, a project funded by the Endangered Languages Development Program (ELDP), available, open access.

The participants were selected based on their lived experience and cultural authority in matters of naming. Interviews were conducted in both English and the local dialect, with the assistance of interpreters where necessary, to preserve the authenticity of responses. The conversations explored the rationale behind name choices, the symbolic weight of particular names, and the social expectations tied to naming conventions. Archival materials were also consulted, including church baptismal records, school registers, and online platforms where Ósósò indigenes names were culled. All of these provided historical context and allowed for a diachronic analysis of naming trends, revealing shifts in practice influenced by religion, migration, and modernization.

5. Data Presentation and Analysis

The section below presents and interprets the data collected during the study. It offers a structural architecture of Ósósò names, discussing key patterns, themes, and the insights that emerged.

5.1 Ósósò Naming Ceremony or Rite

In the accounts provided by the consultants for the study, in Ósósò tradition, a child's naming typically takes place on the eighth day after birth. Before the ceremony begins, symbolic items such as sugar, water, honey, money, and sometimes alligator pepper, kolanut, or bitter kola, are arranged in small portions on plates, placed neatly on a tray, and covered with a clean napkin. The gathering usually starts with a warm welcome from the person leading the ceremony, often a man, possibly reflecting traditional roles within the household. After a brief prayer and a few words explaining the purpose of the event, there's communal singing with thanks and praises offered to God. This act symbolizes their shared belief that God is the creator of the child and the one who made the birth possible. The father then steps forward to hand over a slip of paper with the chosen names to the officiant, who reads them aloud slowly, prompting everyone to repeat each name in unison.

Once the names are announced, the person who is officiating either collects the baby from the mother or invites her to bring the baby, already dressed in white symbolizing the child's purity uncharted life journey, close to the tray of items. Each item is gently placed on the child's lips, accompanied by a spoken blessing linked with what each symbolizes. For example:

- i. **Sugar** symbolizes a sweet life
- ii. **Water** represents purity and clarity
- iii. **Honey** stands for enduring sweetness
- iv. **Kolanut** conveys significance and respect among peers
- v. **Money** is a prayer for prosperity
- vi. **Bible** (if present) reflects spiritual growth
- vii. Other items might include a pen (for knowledge), white cloth (for a pure life), gin (for strength), salt (for flavor), and palm oil (for richness).

With each act guests are invited to take part in the items and once this major aspect has been concluded, gifts - often monetary- are placed by guests in a tray passed around. The parents may then say a few words of thanks before the ceremony closes with a final prayer. What follows is a lively celebration with food, drinks, and socializing.

Despite the influence of modernity, religious shifts, and intermarriage, certain foundational aspects of the Ósósò naming ceremony remain deeply rooted in tradition. These enduring elements include:

- i. **Patriarchal Naming Practice**
Naming in Ósósò culture is traditionally the father's prerogative. While the grandfather may occasionally be honored with the task,

it is the father who typically selects and presents the names. The final list often includes contributions from close relatives and significant figures in the child's life, resulting in a child receiving anywhere from eight to twelve names. Over time, one name becomes dominant - usually the one most frequently used by the mother.

ii. **Gender Considerations**

The child's sex plays a key role in name selection. While some names are unisex, others are distinctly masculine or feminine. The gender of the child influences only the name and not the symbolic items used during the ceremony. Names such as *Iyanfe* ("Mother of the home") are clearly matriarchal, while *Itose* "Father is back" reflects patriarchal lineage. Both names, however, allude to the return or reincarnation of deceased family members, reinforcing the belief in ancestral presence and continuity within the community.

iii. **Birth Circumstances**

Names may also reflect the conditions surrounding the child's birth. For instance, a child born with an umbilical cord around their neck is typically named 'Ojo'. Twins are named 'Taiwo and Kehinde' according to birth order, while a child born after twins is called Idowu, a name that has evolved into a unisex designation. Aina, however, remains exclusively feminine. These names, borrowed from Yoruba tradition, highlight the historical and cultural ties between the Ósósò people and their interactions with Yoruba communities.

iv. **Religious Influence**

Although not always overt, the family's religious orientation can subtly shape the naming process. Whether rooted in traditional

beliefs, Christianity, or Islam, the spiritual background of the household often finds expression in the names chosen for the child

5.2 Structural Architecture of Ósósò Names

To carry out a linguistic and cultural analysis of the naming tradition of Ósósò people, this study draws up a curated pool of 56 indigenous names as shown below:

No.	Name	Phonetic Form	Orthographic Form	Translation	Semantic Theme
1.	Abuemumeh	ábùèmúmhè	Abuemumèh	Everyone Rejoice with me	Collective Celebration
2.	Afe	àfe	Àfẹ	Home	Rootedness
3.	Afekhafe	áfekhafe	Àfẹkhàfẹ	Home is home	Belonging/Rootedness
4.	Afemikhe	áfemikhe	Àfẹmikhẹ	I'm fighting for home	Loyalty/Defensive Love
5.	Afeyanogbo	aféyànògbò	Àféyánògbò	No one can live alone; you are owned by your community	Communal Identity
6.	Afomeyan (Afoyan)	àfomeyā (Afoyan)	Afomèyán (Afoyan)	No one can have everything	Moderation/Realism
7.	Agboadioyog boguo	ágbòádíoyògbògúó	Agbòadioyògbògúo	Life is not for just one person	Communal Responsibility
8.	Agbowerimeh	ágbòwérímhè	Agbowerimeh	My life is sweet	Personal Fulfillment
9.	Agbowero	ágbòwérò	Àgbòwérò	Life is sweet	Joy/Appreciation
10.	Ajimebue	ádjímèbúé	Ájímèbuẹ	Rejoice with	Shared

				me	Joy/Celebration
11.	Akiroso	àkíròsò	Àkíròsò	Tómòrrow will be good	Optimism/ Hope
12.	Akugbe	àkugbe	Àkugbe	Let us unite	Unity/Togetherness
13.	Akojimah	àkòdžímhà	Àkòjímàh	Tómòrrow is far	Uncertainty/Foresight
14.	Aminebue	Aminebue	Aminebu	The child that brings joy	Fulfilment
15.	Asena	ásénà	Àsénà	It will not work for them	Protection/Resistance
16.	Egbeakhe	ègbèàkhè	Égbèàkhè	We fight for the body	Unity/Survival
17.	Emifa	èmifá	èmifá	I am free	Liberation
18.	Emariabe	èmàriàbè	èmàriàbè	I'm not guilty	Vindication
19.	Emichogbo	èmìchògbò	èmìchògbò	I give thanks	Gratitude/Spiritual Humility
20.	Évèshòre	évéfòrè	Évèshòrè	God is great	Praise/Divine Majesty
21.	Évèshòdjimeyah	évéfòdjimeyah	Évèshòdjimeyah	Emmanuel / God is with me	Divine Presence
22.	Évèshòdjina meh	évéfòdjinam eh	Évèshòdjinam eh	God has done it for me	Fulfilled Prayer
23.	Évèshòfasimefu	évéfòfasimefu	Évèshòfasimefu	God has delivered me	Redemption
24.	Évèshòrere	évéfòrere	Évèshòrere	God is Almighty	Supreme Divinity
25.	Évèshòsarimeh	évéfòsarimeh	Évèshòsarimeh	God remember me	Divine Mercy
26.	Évèshòsonameh	évéfòsonameh	Évèshòsonameh	God is good to me	Personal Testimony

27.	Évéshòyan	évéfòjá	Évéshòyan	God is the owner	Faith/Divine Ownership
28.	Ibefu	ìbèfù	Ìbèfù	Courage	Inner Strength
29.	Ibuebue	Ìbùèbùè	Ibùèbùè	Rejoice	Joyful Expression
30.	Iburuvose	Ìbùrúvòsè	Ìbùrúvòsè	Blessing	Divine Grace
31.	Imiefuo	Ìmiéfùò	Ìmiéfùò	Faith	Spiritual Conviction
32.	Iredafe	Ìrédàfè	Ìrédàfè	Kingdom	Homeland/Power Structure
33.	Irete	írètè	Írètè	Gift	Blessing/Divine Favor
34.	Írètènévéshò	írètenévéfò	Írètènévéshò	God's gift	Divine Blessing
35.	Iroso	íròsò	Íròsò	It will be better	Resilience/Feminine Hope
36.	Itafe	ítàfè	Ítàfè	Father of home (kingdom)	Patriarchal Authority
37.	Itègbemie	ìtègbèmié	Ìtègbèmié	Endurance	Perseverance
38.	Itose	ítòsé	Ítòsé	Father is back/has come	Return & Restoration
39.	Itote	ítóté	Ítóté	Praise	Worship
40.	Iyanfe	íyàfè	Íyàn fè	Mother of home (kingdom)	Matriarchal Nurture
41.	Iyanse	íyònsé	Íyònsé	Mother is back/has come	Reunion & Comfort
42.	Ocheche	óṣṣèṣṣè	Óchèchè	Goodness	Moral Excellence
43.	Ochecheafu	óṣṣèṣṣèafu	Óchèchèàfù	Goodness never go unrewarded	Eternal Goodness
44.	Ogbogboyan	ògbògbòjá	ògbògbòyán	Everyone has (will have)	Justice/Fairness

				their own	
45.	Omemah	ómèmhá	Ómémáh	Creator	Origin/Divine Power
46.	Ómòkeyan	ómòkéyá	ómòkéyán	Child is the gain	Reward of Parenthood
47.	Ómòkhagbo	ómòkhágbò	ómòkhágbò	Child is life	Essence of Existence
48.	Ómòkhireyan i	ómòkhireyan i	ómòkhireyani	Child is wealth	Value of Parenthood
49.	Ómòkhode	ómòkhode	ómòkhode	A Child is the cloth (proverbial)	Symbolism of Value
50.	Ómòwero	ómòwéró	ómòwéró	Child is sweet	Parental Joy
51.	Osonameh	Ósónámè	Ósónámè	Let it be well with me/ I'm blessed	Divine Blessings
52.	Oyiévéshò	Ojíévéfò	Óyíévéshò	God's own	Sacred Belonging
53.	Oyimeafu	Ójiméáfú	Óyiméáfú	Mine will not perish	Hope/Preservation
54.	Oyimeh	ójimè	óyimhè	My own	Possession/Identity
55.	Unukhosie	Únùkhófiè	Únùkhóshìè	virtue is the real beauty	Character/Eloquence
56.	Uyenikoshe	Úyènikófè	Úyènikóshè	Good character is beauty	Virtue/Inner Worth

Each name has been systematically categorized to reveal underlying patterns and meanings that reflect both linguistic structure and cultural values along three sub-themes as follows:

- i. **Morphosyntactic structure:** The classification begins by examining how names are formed, not through word formation processes like affixation or reduplication, but rather through the

syntactic arrangement of lexical categories within each name. The focus here is on how combinations of nouns, verbs, and other grammatical elements produce metaphorical or relational meanings that reflect cultural values and lived experiences.

- ii. **Grammatical structure:** Names are further classified based on their grammatical orientation to reveal how Ósósò names function not just as identifiers, but as expressions of worldview, emotion, and situational context within standard grammatical sub-categories of imperatives, declaratives, temporal clauses etc.
- iii. **Semantic theme:** Finally, the names are grouped by, uncovering the cultural narratives embedded within them. Themes range from spiritual devotion, ancestral homage, and birth circumstances to aspirations for the child’s future. This semantic layer provides insight into the values, beliefs, and historical experiences that inform naming practices in Ósósò.

5.2.1 Morphosyntactic Structure

Data 1: Noun + Noun (compound nouns form metaphorical or relational meaning)

- i. Oyi + évèshò → Óyíévéshò
‘God’s own/property’ property God
- ii. Íyòn + àfè → Íyonàfè
‘mother of home’ Mother home
- iii. Írètè + évèshò → Írètènévéshò
‘God’s gift’ Gift God
- iv. ọ̀mò + kílí + írèyànì → Ọ̀mòkílíyànì
‘Child is wealth’

Child is wealth

is

- v. ọ̀mò + kílí + eyan → Ọ̀mòkhiyan
'Child is gain'
Child is gain

Data 2: Noun + Adjective (Adjectives modify Noun to describe a quality or character.)

- i. Ụ̀nù + kílí + óshìè → Ụ̀nùkòshè
'virtue is the real beauty' mouth is beauty
- ii. Ụ̀yèni + kílí + óshè → Ụ̀yènikòshè
'Good character is beauty' character is beauty
- iii. Óchèchè + á + fù → Óchèchèàfù
'Goodness never goes Goodness neg
wasted
unrewarded'
- iv. Évésho + ò + ré → Évéshòré
'God is great' God be great
- v. Àgbò + ò + ré → Àgbòwèrò
'life is sweet'
Life be sweet

Data 3: Noun + Verb (Noun followed by verb (plus noun) forms a clause denoting action.)

- i. ẹ̀mì + chí + ógbò → ẹ̀mìchógbò 'I
give thanks'
I/me give thanks

- ii. á + dhí + me + bué → Ájímèbué
‘Rejoice with me’
all join me rejoice
- iii. Évèshò + sari + mé → Évèshòsarimeh
‘God has remembered me’ God remember me
- iv. á + bùémú + me → Abùémúmèh
‘Gather and rejoice with me’
all gather me
- v. évèshò + dhi + na mèh → évèfòdjinamèh ‘God
has done it for My own’
God do for me

5.3 Grammatical Sentence Types in Ósósò Names

The grammatical architecture of Ósósò names reveals a rich interplay between linguistic form and expressive function. Names are not merely labels, they often take the shape of full sentences or clauses, each carrying distinct emotional, philosophical, or situational weight. For this study, the names have been grouped into seven grammatical subcategories, each reflecting a unique communicative intent or structural pattern.

The categories include:

- i. **Declarative** - Names that make straightforward statements or assertions, often reflecting values, beliefs, or observations (e.g., “Child is joy”).
- ii. **Imperative/Exhortative** - Names that issue commands, advice, or encouragement, typically directed toward the child or the community (e.g., “Be strong”).

- iii. Exclamatory/Emotive - Names that express intense emotion, surprise, or admiration, often marked by heightened tone or affective language.
- iv. **Temporal Clauses** - Names that reference time-related events or conditions, such as the moment of birth or significant historical timing.
- v. **Relational Clauses** - Names that define relationships, roles, or connections between the child and others (e.g., “Child of the promise”).
- vi. **Proverbial/Idiomatic Expressions** - Names rooted in cultural idioms or proverbs, often carrying metaphorical or philosophical meaning beyond their literal interpretation.
- vii. **Conditional Clauses** - Names that imply hypothetical or contingent scenarios, often expressing hope, caution, or moral reflection (e.g., “If you do well...”).

Each category offers insight into how Ósósò naming practices encode not just identity, but also emotion, wisdom, and social context. The tables that follow present representative examples from each grammatical type, illustrating the diversity and depth of expression embedded in these indigenous names

Data 1: Declarative.

s/no	Name	Phonetic form	detailed orthography	Translation
1.	Ocheche	óʃèʃè	Óchèchè	Goodness
2.	Ochecheafu	óʃèʃèafu	Óchèchèàfú	Goodness never go unrewarded
3.	Ajimebue	ádʒímèbúé	Ájímèbué	Rejoice with

				me
4.	Akiroso	àkíròsò	Àkíròsò	TÓmòrrow will be good
5.	Akofe	àkófẹ	Àkófẹ	It's not new
6.	Akojimah	àkòdžímhà	Àkòjímàh	TÓmòrrow is far
7.	Asena	ásénà	Àsénà	It will not be possible for them
8.	Egbeakhe	ègbèákhè	Égbèákhè	We fight for the body
9.	Emifa	èmifá	Èmifá	I am free
10.	Emari-abe	èmàríàbè	Èmàríàbè	I'm not guilty
11.	Èmichogbo	èmìchógbò	Èmìchógbò	I give thanks
12.	Évéshòre	évéřòré	Évéshòré	God is great
13.	Évéshòdjime yah	évéřòdjime yah	Évéshòdjimeyah	Emmanuel / God is with me
14.	Évéshòdjina meh	évéřòdjina meh	Évéshòdjinameh	God has done it for me
15.	Évéshòfasim efuo	évéřòfasim efuo	Évéshòfasimefu o	God has delivered me
16.	Ómòkhode	ómòkhejá	ómòkhireyani	Child is the cloth
17.	Ómòkeyan	ómòkéyá	ómòkéyán	Child is the gain
18.	Ómòkhagbo	ómòkhágbò	ómòkhágbò	Child is life
19.	Agbowerime h	àgbòwérím hè	Àgbòwérò	My life is sweet
20.	Agbowero	àgbòwérò	Àgbòwérò	Life is sweet

Data 2: Imperatives/Exhortative – Names that express commands or calls for action based on experience

s/no	Name	Phonetic form	detailed orthography	Translation
1.	Agbowerimeh	àgbòwérímhè	Àgbòwérò	My life is sweet
2.	Abuemumeh	omòkhejà	omòkhireyani	Rejoice with me
3.	Ibuebue	Ibuebue	Ibuebue	Rejoice
4.	Itote	ìtóté	Ìtóté	Praise
5.	Michogbo	ojime		I give thanks

Data 3: Exclamatory/Emotives- Names that expresses strong emotion of thanksgiving based on experience

s/no	Name	Phonetic form	detailed orthography	Translation
1.	Évèshòdjina meh	évéʃòdjinameh	Évèshòdjina meh	God has done it for me!
2.	Évèshòfasim efuo	évéʃòfasimefu o	Évèshòfasim efuo	God is Almighty!
3.	Emifa	èmifá	èmifá	I am free!
4.	Agbowerimeh	àgbòwérímhè	Àgbòwérò	My life is sweet!
5.	Agbowero	àgbòwérò	Àgbòwérò	Life is sweet!

Data 4: Conditional Clauses - Names that express possibility, hope, or hypothetical outcomes

s/no	Name	Phonetic form	detailed orthography	Translation
1.	Akiroso	àkíròsò	Àkíròsò	Tomorrow will be good

2.	iroso	iroso	iroso	It will be better
3.	Oyimeafu	Ójímèàfú	Óyímèàfú	Mine will not perish
4.	Asena	ásénà	Àsénà	It will not be possible for them

Data 5: Temporal Clauses - Names that refer to time or timing of events.

s/no	Name	Phonetic form	detailed orthography	Translation
1.	Akojimah	àkòdžímhà	Àkòjímàh	Tomorrow is far
2.	Akiroso	àkíròsò	Àkíròsò	Tomorrow will be good
3.	iroso	iroso	iroso	It will be better

Data 6: Relational Clauses - Names that imply relationships or possession

s/no	Name	Phonetic form	detailed orthography	Translation
1	Oyièvéshò	ójiévéfò	Oyièvesho	God's own
2	Oyimeh	ójímè	Oyimè	My own
3	Oyogbo	ójògbò	oyogbò	Somebody else's own

Data 7: Divine/Spiritual - Names that imply experienced divine intervention or reincarnation

s/no	Name	Phonetic form	detailed orthography	Translation
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1.	Évèshòdjina meh	évéfòdjinameh	Évèshòdjinameh	God has done it for me
2.	Évèshòfasim efuo	évéfòfasimefu o	Évèshòfasimefu o	God has delivered me
3.	Évèshòrere	évéfòrere	Évèshòrere	God Almighty
4.	Itose	ítòsé	Ítòsé	It's not new
5.	Iyonse	íyǒsé	Iyǒnse	Mother is back
6.	Iyanfe	Íyǎfè	Íyǎnfè	Mother is back

5.3.1 Semantic Themes in Ósósò Names

Beyond grammatical structure, Ósósò names carry profound semantic weight, often serving as vessels for cultural values, emotional expression, and spiritual beliefs. In this section, names are grouped according to their core thematic essence, and these themes reflect the intentions and aspirations of the name-givers, as well as the social and spiritual context surrounding the child's birth. Whether invoking divine presence, expressing moral virtues, or capturing circumstantial realities, each name resonates with meaning that transcends its phonetic form.

Data 1: Spirituality & Divine Attributes theme

No.	Name	Translation
1.	Iretenévèshò	God's gift
2.	Évèshòyan	God is the owner
3.	Évèshòrere	God Almighty
4.	Évèshòsonameh	God is good to me

No.	Name	Translation
5.	Évéshòdjinameh	God has done it for me
6.	Évéshòdjimeyah	Emmanuel / God is with me
7.	Évéshòfasimefuo	God has delivered me
8.	Évéshòsarimeh	God remember me
9.	Oyiévéshò	God's own
10.	Omemah	Creator
11.	Imiefuo	Faith

Data 2: Speech, Character & Virtue

No.	Name	Translation
1.	Unukhosie	Mouth is beauty
2.	Uyenikoshe	Character is beauty
3.	Ibefu	Courage
4.	Ocheche	Goodness
5.	Ochecheafu	Goodness never ends
6.	Mariabe	I'm not guilty

Data 3: Home, Belonging & Identity

No.	Name	Translation
1.	Afekhafe	Home is home
2.	Akofe	It's not new
3.	Afemikhe	I'm fighting for home

No.	Name	Translation
4.	Afe	Home
5.	Itafe	Father of home
6.	Iyanfe	Mother of home
7.	Iredafe	Kingdom
8.	Afeyanogbo	You are owned by your neighborhood

Data 4: Children & Parenthood

No.	Name	Translation
1.	Ómòwéro	Child is sweet
2.	Ómòkhírèyàni	Child is wealth
3.	Ómòkhòdé	Child is the cloth
4.	Ómòkéyán	Child is gain
5.	Ómòkhàgbò	Child is life

Data 5: Hope, Time & Possibility

No.	Name	Translation
1.	Akojimah	Tomorrow is far
2.	Akiroso	Tomorrow will be good
3.	Iroso	It will be better
4.	Oyimeafu	Mine will not perish
5.	Asena	It will not be possible

Data 6: Action, Praise & Celebration

No.	Name	Translation
1.	Michogbo	I give thanks

No.	Name	Translation
2.	Ajimebue	Rejoice with me
3.	Abuemumeh	Rejoice with me
4.	Ibuebue	Rejoice
5.	Itote	Praise

Data 7: Return & Reunion

No.	Name	Translation
1.	Iyanse/Iyonse	Mother is back
2.	Itose	Father is back

Data 8: Wisdom & Proverbial Insight

No.	Name	Translation
1.	Agboadioyogboguo	Life is not for one person
2.	Afomeyan	You cannot have everything
3.	Ogbogboyan	Everyone will have their own
4.	Ómòkhode	Child is the cloth
5.	Afeyanogbo	You are owned by your neighborhood

Data 9: Self, Possession & Identity

No.	Name	Translation
1.	Oyimeh	My own
2.	Oyiévéshò	God's own

Data 10: Freedom & Deliverance

No.	Name	Translation
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No.	Name	Translation
3.	Emifa	I am free
4.	Évèshòfasimefuò	God has delivered me

5.4 Phonological Structure of Personal Names in Ósósò

5.4.1 Syllable Structure

Ósósò personal names consistently follow the canonical Consonant-Vowel (CV) syllable pattern, prohibiting consonant clusters at the beginning, middle, or end of syllables and ensuring that each syllable is simple and sonorous. The result is a rhythmic and fluid pronunciation that aligns with the tonal and melodic nature of the language.

- Example 1: évèfòdjinameh → [é-vé-fò-dzi-na-mɛ] ‘God has done it for me’
Although the orthography may suggest complexity, the phonological realization breaks down into CV syllables or V (onset)
- Example 2: évèfòrere → [é-vé-fò-re-re] ‘God is almighty’
Each syllable adheres to the CV or V (onset) structure, prohibiting consonant clustering or consonants at final position.

This preference for CV syllables contributes to the musicality of Ósósò names and reflects broader phonological tendencies among Edoid languages generally.

5.4.2 Elision

Elision is a common phonological process in Ósósò, particularly when two vowels occur at morpheme boundaries. To avoid dissonance or awkward transitions (cacophony), one of the adjacent vowels is often elided, resulting in smoother, more euphonic constructions.

- Example 1: $\acute{o}ji + \acute{o}gb\grave{o} \rightarrow \acute{o}j\acute{o}gb\grave{o} \rightarrow oyogbo$ ‘somebody else’s own’

$V1 \# V2 \rightarrow V2$ orthographically

The vowel at the end of *oyi* and the initial vowel of *Ede* undergo elision, producing a more fluid compound name.

- Example 2: $Ita + \acute{o}se \rightarrow it\acute{o}se \rightarrow Itose$ ‘father returned’

$V1 \# V2 \rightarrow V2$

The final vowel of *ita* is dropped to prevent a hiatus, allowing for seamless pronunciation.

This elision process is not random but governed by phonological rules that prioritize ease of articulation and auditory harmony. It also reflects the language’s sensitivity to prosodic balance, especially in the construction of personal or honorific names that may be compounded.

6. Conclusion and recommendation

This study has illuminated the intricate relationship between language, culture, and identity within the naming practices of the Ósòsò community. Far beyond mere labels, names in Ósòsò society are linguistically structured expressions of communal philosophy, spiritual belief, and social expectation. Imperative names function as moral injunctions (e.g., Uyenikoshe -“Character is beauty”), declarative names assert communal truths (e.g., Akiroso “Tomorrow will be good”), and interrogative names pose existential questions (e.g., Onakho - “Who knows tomorrow?”), and conditional names reflect situational wisdom (e.g., Afekhafe -“Home is home”). The work further affirms that in many African societies, including Ósòsò, names serve as:

- Identity markers, reflecting ethnic, familial, and religious affiliations
- Narratives of experience, capturing birth circumstances, ancestral memory, or historical events

- Social signals, indicating gender, status, lineage, or community roles

Ósósò names, therefore, are not isolated linguistic units but are part of a broader system of cultural expression. They encode values, beliefs, and histories, and their analysis requires attention to both form and function. The metaphor of the child “eating” a name as depicted in the concept ‘ìtí óvà ní Òmò ré – to give a child name to eat’ underscores the depth of this tradition, suggesting that names are not simply given but internalized, consumed, and lived. The categorization of names into imperative, declarative, interrogative, and conditional forms reveals a sophisticated syntactic architecture that mirrors everyday speech and reflects the community’s worldview. Each name carries with it a narrative, of hope, morality, gratitude, uncertainty, or resilience, shaped by factors such as gender, religious disposition, and birth circumstances.

Ultimately, this research contributes to the broader discourse on African onomastics and linguistic anthropology, affirming that in Ósósò society, to name is to remember, to instruct, and to belong. The insights that affirm the centrality of naming in the construction of personal and collective identity and even though migration and intermarriage may have weakened fraternity, loyalty to one’s identity must be safeguarded and name must feature in the identity protection strategy.

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