

# A Lexical Morphological Analysis of Nicknames in Ng'umbo - A Dialect of Bemba, Zambia

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## Abstract

Ng'umbo, a dialect of Bemba, is predominantly spoken in the Luapula and Copperbelt provinces of Zambia. This dialect is characterized by various types of nicknames that reflect its speakers' shared experiences, values, and beliefs. This study aims to analyze the morphological structures of selected nicknames within the Ng'umbo dialect. Using a sample of 60 nicknames gathered through document analysis, interviews, and self-introspection, the study demonstrates that these nicknames exhibit distinct morphological structures primarily influenced by the morphology of Bantu languages. The analysis identifies several structures, including: stem only, prefix, stem with a final vowel, root with a final vowel, and combinations of prefixes and stems. Additionally, the study recognizes structures related to denominals, deverbals, and de-adjectival forms. Furthermore, some nicknames were found to be neologisms (newly created terms) or derived from loanwords. The study involved eight (8) participants to gather nicknames and their meanings, alongside insights from one of the researchers, who is a speaker of the dialect. The analysis was anchored in lexical morphology, allowing for the segmentation of nicknames as lexemes of the dialect, thus facilitating a clearer analysis and interpretation of the data.

*Keywords:* Bemba, dialect, Ng'umbo, nickname, nicknaming, morphology, lexical, Zambia..

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## 1. Introduction

Ng'umbo is considered one of the dialects of Bemba (M42) language, which is recognized as a Regional Official Language in Zambia and a major language grouping within the country (Simachenya & Mambwe, 2023). The Ng'umbo dialect is spoken by the Ng'umbo people, a significant population of whom is found in the northern part of the Samfya district in the Luapula province of Zambia. They also reside on the islands of Lake Bangweulu, specifically Chishi and Mbabala. The Ng'umbo territory is organized into five chiefdoms, each overseen by its own chief. On the mainland, there are three chiefs: Senior Chief Mwewa Chibale, Chief Mwansakombe, and Chief Chitembo. Meanwhile, the islands of Lake Bangweulu are governed by two chiefs: Chief Mbulu Pabemba and Chief Mulongwe.

Geographically, the Ng'umbo dialect spreads from Musaila, bordering Samfya district, and extends to the borders between Luwingu and Samfya in Chief Mwansakombe's chiefdom. To the west, the Ng'umbo people share borders with the Ushi chiefdoms in Mansa. Additionally, the Ng'umbo dialect is spoken in urban areas such as Mufulira, Kitwe, and Chingola of the Copperbelt Province of Zambia, primarily by native Ng'umbo speakers who migrated from rural areas to these cities for work in the mines, aiming to improve their economic status.

Furthermore, many fish and cassava traders conduct business in these towns using the Ng'umbo dialect. Interestingly, non-Ng'umbo speakers also use the dialect for trade and other similar activities because of its linguistic richness exhibited in its unique forms of linguistic expressions. These linguistic characteristics make the study of nicknaming in Ng'umbo an intriguing undertaking. Like other dialect speakers, Ng'umbo speakers name themselves and others, things abstract and concrete, using their dialect. Names as part of language are analysable as linguistic entities from any level of linguistic analysis which include phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics, sociolinguistic, and so on. This study endeavours to conduct a lexical morphological analysis of Ng'umbo nicknames.

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This study is within the field of linguistic onomastics, which is a study of names. It aims to establish the morphological structures of selected nicknames in Ng'umbo. The study was motivated by observed linguistic peculiarities like names in general and nicknames in particular.

## **2. Literature Review**

According to Mambwe, Mangi, and Njobvu (2024), nicknames are significant and semantically rich linguistic tokens that can be analyzed as part of language. This means that nicknames have a structure similar to other aspects of language, which can be decomposed into their smallest indivisible elements for meaning. They further note that names reflect human social practices and experiences, making them important components of language rather than arbitrary symbols (Mambwe et al. 2024). Names serve as meaningful linguistic and cultural elements that signify status, achievements, and privilege. The practice of naming is ancient and fundamental, distinguishing humans from all other living creatures (Mambwe & Fernando, 2016).

In Zambia, onomastics is a relatively new discipline, resulting in limited literature available, particularly concerning nicknames and their structures. Existing studies have primarily focused on anthropology, literary studies, and sociolinguistics rather than the structural aspects of nicknames. Wakumelo's (2015) study provides insights into how human beings extend their agency of naming to other animate beings and perhaps by extension to peculiar aspects of social life such as nicknames. Thus, her study demonstrates human creativity in manipulating language as a resource in forming meaningful linguistic tokens (cf. Mambwe & Fernando Da Costa, 2015, 2016; Mambwe & Jimaima, 2019; Simachenya & Mambwe, 2023; Banda & Mambwe, 2024; Mukonde-Mulenga & Mambwe, 2024). This act of manipulating language in creative and unique ways is essentially demonstrable in nicknaming among the Ng'umbo speakers who coin nicknames that reflect their socio-cultural practices, lived experiences, humour, endearment, mockery, and so on.

Furthermore, Mambwe et al, (2024) conducted a study on nicknames associated with physical appearances among the Kaonde people of Solwezi in Zambia. While their study adds to onomastic studies on nicknames in Zambia, it does not go into analysing the morphological structures of the nicknames.

While a few studies on names/nicknames in Zambia have focused on social or literary aspects of names, there are some studies that have ventured into analyzing structural aspects of names. The more recent study focusing on morphological aspects of names, is that by Matukuto, Jimaima and Simungala (2023) who analyzed the morphological structure of Bemba Christian theonyms. Their study establishes that these Christian theonyms have two morphological structures namely sentential and proverbial structures. The sentential structure consists of a subject and predicate while the proverbial structure has standard metaphoric and paradigmatic forms. This study provides insights into the nature of morphological structures that names can take given the complexity of Bantu morphology.

In addition, Hang'ombe's (2015) study on the morphology and semantics of Tonga anthroponyms and nicknames is yet another study from which this study drew inspiration. Hang'ombe focused on the morphology of Tonga anthroponyms and nicknames. He established that these names tend to come in the form of deverbals, denominals, deadjectivals and denominals with structures influenced by the Bantu nominal class system. These were found to be prevalent morphological structures. Hang'ombe's and that of Matukuto et al, (2023) are significant because they provided insights in the analysis of the morphological aspects of selected nicknames in Ng'umbo.

Felecan's (2009) study also provides a further foundation for the current research by exploring the various linguistic structural aspects of nicknames. He identifies four types of nicknames based on their structure: one-word nicknames, phrasal nicknames, sentence nicknames, and proverbial nicknames. These nicknames exhibit a grammatical configuration that combines familiarity and expressivity. He adds that a nickname is a construction that adjusts its phonetic structure to align with the internal form of the word used to refer to an individual.

This section of the paper has highlighted selected literature on names and nicknames in general. The foundational studies primarily focus on the morphological and linguistic aspects of names and nicknames, demonstrating that nicknames are decomposable. These studies offer valuable insights into the nature of nicknames, thereby enhancing our understanding of the morphological structure of Ng'umbo nicknames.

This study is informed by the theoretical concept of agglutination and lexical morphology. Agglutination, as a morphological process, effectively illustrates a language's tendency to attach or 'glue' linguistic elements together. This morphological concept is instrumental in comprehending the nature of nicknames by breaking down these

‘glued’ elements into identifiable, meaningful parts that contribute to the structure of names, thanks to lexical morphology (Matukuto, et al, 2023).

Lexical morphology, a critical branch of morphology, specifically addresses the lexicon—defined as the comprehensive collection of lexemes within a language. This approach is particularly relevant because it prioritizes word formation processes, including derivation and compounding, which lead to the existence of lexica, including nicknames as significant linguistic signs. Central to this field is the principle that the morphological component of grammar is systematically organized into hierarchical strata, as noted by Pesetsky (1979) and Kiparsky (1982). Through lexical morphology, words are formed by joining morphemes in the lexicon, with affixes adhering to their sub-categorization frames.

Initially proposed by Pesetsky in 1979 and further elaborated by Kiparsky in 1982, this paper adopts lexical morphology to analyze the morphology of Ng’umbo nicknames. It is important to recognize that there are two basic approaches to morphological analysis: the analytical and synthetic. This study confidently adopts the analytical approach, which systematically breaks down words into morphemes (cf. Matukuto, et al, 2023).

Lexical morphology is utilized to segment and identify the morphemes constituting Ng’umbo, which are formed through derivation and compounding, thus clearly establishing their morphological structure. A crucial characteristic of lexical morphology is that “the word, rather than the morpheme, is regarded as the key unit of morphological analysis” (Katamba, 1993: 89). Consequently, this study analyses selected Ng’umbo nicknames presented as words, reinforcing Houis’s assertion (1983: 8) that “names are practically not distinct from other linguistic signs (words) at the level of form and morphology.” The study asserts that agglutination, as a morphological process, effectively illustrates a language’s tendency to attach or ‘glue’ linguistic elements together. This morphological concept is instrumental in comprehending the nature of nicknames by breaking down these ‘glued’ elements into identifiable, meaningful parts that contribute to the structure of names, thanks to lexical morphology.

The segmentation of morphemes contained in Ng’umbo nicknames is guided by the Bemba nominal class prefixes presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Bemba Nominal Class Prefixes (and examples)

<i>Noun class</i>	<i>augment noun prefix</i>		<i>example</i>	<i>gloss</i>
1	u	mu	umushi	village
1a	∅		kolwe	monkey
2	a	ba	abantu	people
2a	∅	baa	baakolwe	monkeys
3	u	mu	umuti	medicine
4	i	mi	imiti	medicines
5	i	i	ishnina	name
5a	∅	li	lipompwe	renowned thief
6	a	ma	amasako	features
7	i	ci	icibi	door
7a	∅	cii	ciikolwe	big monkey
8	i	fi	ifibi	doors
8a	∅	fii	fiikolwe	ancestors
9	i	n	inkoko	chicken
9a	∅	∅	kaapu	cup
10	i	n	inkoko	chickens
11	u	lu	ulupe	winnowing basket
12	a	ka	akantu	thing
12a	∅	kaa	akantu	things
13	u	tu	utuntu	things
14	u	bu	ubuuci	honey
14a	∅	buu	buukafundisha	teaching profession
15	u	ku	ukulu	leg
16	∅	pa	pamulu	on top
17	∅	ku	ku kalale	to town

18	∅	mu	mu kanwa	in the mouth
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In analysing, the sentential structures of Ng’umbo, the template for Bemba verbal structures will be used to segment the different morphemes that make up the Ng’umbo sentential nicknames.

Table 2: A Template for Bemba Verbal Structures

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
PRE-SM NEG/REL/T	SM	NEG	T/A/M	OM/REFL	ROOT	EXT	FV	POST-FV /HON/LOC
Ta NEG	tu 1p		lee PRES. PROG	mu 1OM	lee write	el APPL	a FV	
‘we are not writing’								

### 3. Research Method

This study employed a descriptive research design informed by a qualitative research approach. The purpose of this design was to provide detailed morphological descriptions of selected nicknames in Ng’umbo. The primary goal of descriptive research design is to describe phenomenon, taking into account all possible aspects needing to be described.

This research was conducted in the Samfya district in Luapula province of Zambia and Mufulira district of the Copperbelt province of Zambia. The two towns were chosen being the main areas where speakers of the dialect are concentrated. The sample size included 8 participants, primarily composed of elderly individuals and name bearers, who were selected through snowball and random sampling methods. Participants were either residents or visitors of the areas studied, provided that they possessed nicknames in the language of interest.

Ng’umbo, as a dialect of Bemba, has not been officially documented in writing. Consequently, almost all data sources relied on oral information from elders, name givers, and name bearers or users. Therefore, this study utilized primary sources of data.

Data collection was achieved through snowball sampling, in which one elderly individual provided information and then directed the researcher to another source for additional data. Simple interviews were conducted with participants selected. Introspection also played a role in data collection, as one of the researchers was a native speaker of Ng’umbo.

Data analysis involved segmenting, identifying, and describing the morphemes that constitute the selected nicknames, followed by providing detailed descriptions of these identified morphemes as they appeared in Ng’umbo. Lexical morphology was applied in this analysis, as it allowed the study to examine the elements (morphemes) that form individual nicknames, focusing on word formation processes such as derivation and compounding of selected nicknames as linguistic signs.

It should be noted that since Ng’umbo is a dialect of Bemba, a Bantu language, the nominal class system associated with the morphology of most Bantu languages was crucial in the segmentation of the lexemes (nicknames) analyzed (see Table 1).

### 4. Results and Discussions

#### 6.0. General remarks

This section presents the findings and discussions on the morphological structures of Ng’umbo nicknames. The findings indicate that the common morphological structures of these nicknames are predominantly influenced by the Bantu nominal class prefixes, as detailed in Table 1. Therefore, the study identified the following general patterns in the morphological structures of Ng’umbo nicknames.

- (a) Stem only
- (b) Prefix + stem
- (c) Prefix + stem or root + fv (final vowel)
- (d) prefix + root + fv (ext) + prefix + stem (for compound lexemes).

In addition to the above, the study also established that most nicknames in Ng’umbo displayed either sentential or phrasal structures (see also Pongweni, 1983; Felecan, 2009). Furthermore, the findings show *that* the other common morphological structure was associated with neologisms and loan words or borrowed word structures from other languages such as English and Swahili.

### 6.1 Derived nicknames and their morphological structures

In this section, nicknames with the patterns identified above, are further categorized as denominals, deverbals and dejectivals based on how the lexemes (nicknames) are derived or formed (c.f. Hang’ombe, 2015). These are presented and analyzed below.

#### 6.1.1 Denominals

These are nouns which are formed from nominals or other nouns. In this case, the nicknames derived from nouns whether proper or common, are as illustrated below:

1.
  - (a) **Tukuchiputa** (the nickname given to a plump woman)  
 Ø tuku-ci-puta  
 cl.1a-large-cl7-ridged pot (made out of clay) (a plump pot-bellied woman)
  - (b) **Tinaleesa** (nickname given to an extremely religious person)  
 Ø-tin-a leesa  
 cl.1a-fear-fv god (Mr. Fear God)
  - (c) **Chitumbo lulembo** (nickname given to a plump pot-bellied man, cf. (a))  
 chi-tumbo lu-lembo  
 cl.7-hosepipe/intestine cl.11-tattoo (plump pot-bellied man)
  - (d) **Chumang’anga**  
 ci-uma i-ŋanga (nickname given to a fearless person)  
 cl7-riches/wealth/beat-cl9-witchdoctor/ritualist (physically strong and brave person)
  - (e) **Kashakabana** (nickname given to a humble person)  
 ka-sha ka-ba-ana  
 cl12-slave cl12-cl2-child (very humble person)
  - (f) **Mensopanjabi** (nickname given to a womanizer)  
 ma-inso pa-n-jabi (eyes on women)  
 cl.6-eye cl.16-cl.10-girl/ woman
  - (g) **Kaimbi**  
 Ø-kaimbi (nickname given to a renowned witch doctor)  
 cl.1a-tree (powerful witchdoctor)
  - (h) **Bulanda**  
 bu-land-a (poor person)  
 cl.14-poverty/ poor
  - (i) **Mapulanga**  
 ma-pulanga ‘Plunks/wood’  
 cl6-plunk/ wood

Based on the analyzed data, examples 1(a), (b), and (h) include the symbol [Ø-] for the prefix. This indicates that the class exists but has no physical nominal prefix or phonological representation. However, they still belong to class (1a) since they identify a person, and their stems are all associated with common nouns.

In examples 1(c) and (d), the prefix is *chi-* [class 7], which serves augmentative purposes or is used to make the nickname appear unattractive. In example 1(e), the prefix *ka-* [class 12] indicates that the name bearer is down-to-earth.

Examples 1(f), (g), and (j) use the prefix *ma-* [class 4] to show the intensity of actions and the diminutive aspect, respectively. Meanwhile, example 1(i) features the *bu-* prefix from [class 14], which is associated with abstract concepts.

It is noteworthy that while all denominal nicknames have noun stems, some have been created by combining two noun stems, as seen in examples 1(a), (c), (d), (e), and (f). On the other hand, examples 1(g), (h) and (i) are derived from adding a noun prefix to a nominal stem.

### 6.1.2 Deverbals

These are types of nouns derived from verbs, commonly known as deverbals. Deverbal nicknames comprise a derivational morpheme, a root, and a final vowel. The following examples further illustrate these types of nicknames:

2.

- (a) **Kamiima** (nickname given to one who pees on oneself)  
ka-miim-a  
cl.12-rain/shower-fv (person who pees on oneself)
- (b) **Kapulamakumbi** (one with supernatural powers capable of penetrating clouds)  
ka-pul-a ma-kumbi  
Cl.12-pass through-fv cl.6-cloud/ sky (a person who possesses supernatural powers)
- (c) **Kalyamo**  
Ka-ly-a-mo (nickname given to an opportunist)  
Cl.12-eat/benefit-fv from (an opportunist)
- (d) **Chayanamwela** (nickname given to an inconsiderate person)  
ci-a-y-a-na-mu-ela  
cl.7-perf-go-fv with-cl.3-wind (one who goes away with anything, an inconsiderate person)
- (e) **Mulaso**  
Mu-las-o (womanizer)  
cl.1a-piercer/prick-fv (womanizer)
- (f) **Muleshachitendwe** (nickname given to someone who stays away from trouble)  
mu-lesh-a ci-tendw-e  
cl.1-dodge-fv cl7-boredom-fv (peacemaker)
- (g) **Musonsombe**  
mu-sonsomb-e  
cl.1-provoke/ attack-him/her-fv
- (h) **Mumbalafye**  
mu-n-bal-a fye (nickname given to a wizard thought to be proud)  
cl.1-cl.9-provoke/start-fv enclitic (proud wizard)
- (i) **Tafimbwalubilo** (nickname given to a patient person)  
ta-fi-imb-u-a lu-bilo  
Neg-cl.8-dig-pass-fv cl.11-running/quickly/fast/rapid
- (j) **Pakayeloba**  
pa-kay-a i-loba  
cl.16-go/ put-fv cl.5-soil

The analysis of the data reveals several insights regarding the use of prefixes in examples 2(a), (b), and (c). The prefix *ka-* [class 12] is employed to praise the individuals associated with the nicknames, while in example 2 (c), it is used diminutively to critique an unwillingness to work hard and instead to benefit from the labor of others. In example 2 (d), the prefix *ci-* [class 7] is used in an argumentative context. Conversely, examples 2 (e), (f), (g), and (h) feature prefixes that carry the semantic value of ‘person,’ though they can also appear with noun class 3.

In examples 2(i) and 2(j), the prefixes ta- (a negative morpheme) and pa- [class 16] locative prefixes are utilized, respectively. The most common noun prefix in this category of nicknames is mu- [class 1], followed by ka- [class 12], chi- [class 7], and pa- [class 16]. In all of the examples provided, the nicknames are derived from verb roots, often combined with a stem and ending with a final vowel.

Moreover, as illustrated in the examples above, nicknames in this category often have complex stems and can be translated into English as entire clauses. Furthermore, when a verb root in the nickname is extended, it becomes part of the noun stem (cf. Hang’ombe, 2015).

### 6.1.3 De-ajectivals

De-ajectivals are nouns derived from adjectives. According to the findings, these are types of nicknames formed from adjectives. These nicknames are often descriptive, as they use adjectives to characterize the nickname bearer in various ways. Here are some examples to illustrate this.

3.

- (a) **Mwendapole** (nickname given to someone slow at doing things)  
mu-end-a-pole  
cl.1-walk/move-fv-slow (a slow doer)
- (b) **Mupingansofu** mu-ping-a n-sofu (a strong person)  
cl.1-lift up-fv-cl.9-elephant (a fighter)
- (c) **Musulanama**  
mu-sul-a i-nama (skilful hunter)  
cl.1-produce-fv cl.10-meat/ animals
- (d) **Mensopanjabi**  
ma-inso pa-n-jabi (nickname given to a man whose eyes are always on women)  
cl.6-eye cl.16-cl.10-girl/ woman (womanizer)
- (e) **Kafwanda**: Kafwa-nda (nickname given to someone born with a chronic health condition)  
Ka-fw-a-i-nda  
cl.12-die-fv -cl.9-stomach/womb (sicklier)

In example 3 (a-c), nicknames have the prefix mu- from [class 1] with a ‘person’ as a semantic value while in 3 (d) the prefix is ma- from [class 6]. In example 3 (e), the prefix is ka- from class 12 with a semantic value of small things.

From the above analysis, it is observed that there is a variation in noun prefixes, they do not follow a certain pattern and there is no specific class of prefixes. Another noticeable feature is that the stems in all examples in this category of nicknames appear to be nouns. However, the adjectives or descriptive words from which nicknames in examples 3 (a), (b), (c), (d) and (e) are constructed appear to be verbal roots in nature. Furthermore, all nicknames in examples 3 (a) to (e) in this category appear to be compound words or compound nominal. They are formed by a combination of two words or more either from the same word class or different word classes.

### 6.2 Single-word structures

This category of nicknames has nicknames made up of only one word. Most of these nicknames are simple verbs, nouns, and adjectives used ‘nouns’. Felecan (2009), calls such as “one-word nicknames” as in the examples below.

4.

- (a) **Kashiwa** (orphan)  
ka-sh-iw-a  
cl.12-leave-pass-fv
- (b) **Musungu** (nickname given to someone with Western mannerisms)  
mu-sungu  
cl.1-white person/ European
- (c) **Kaimbi** (nickname given to a strong man)  
Ø-kaimbi  
cl.1a-tree

- (e) **Bulanda** (nickname given to a poor person)  
bu-landa ‘Poverty/ poor person’  
cl.14-poverty/ poor
- (f) **Mapulanga** (nickname given to one who works with wood)  
ma-pulanga ‘Plunks/ wood’  
Cl.6-plank/ wood

From the analyzed data in the category above, in example 4 (a), (b) and (g) the nicknames have the following structure: prefix + verb root + fv while in 4 (c), (d), (e) and (f) have prefix + stem as specific common structures. It is important to note that, there is a variation of prefixes that attach to the stems of nicknames as they do not follow a certain pattern, hence, there is no specific class of noun prefixes.

### 6.3 Phrasal or compound nicknames

The study has also found that a good number of the analyzed nicknames appear to be phrases or compound nicknames. According to Felecan (2009), these nicknames are called phrasal nicknames. They are made up of a combination of two or more words from any word class. They follow a morphological structure of compound nouns. These compounds can be composed of a word from two different word classes, for example, a verb and a noun or a noun and adjective. The construction of phrasal nicknames as found in the study is as the examples below:

5.
  - (a) **Kabindachulu** (final hill)  
Kabinda-chulu (compound word meaning the final and protected one)  
cl.12-prohibit/stop-fv cl.7-hill  
V + N
  - (b) **Chatwalamwilye** (proverbial warning against danger)  
Chatwala-mwilye (compound word)  
ci-a-twal-a mu-ilye  
cl.7-perf-take-fv cl.3-bird  
V + N
  - (c) **Mutunwamasembe** (stubborn and brave person)  
Mutunwa-masembe  
mu-tun-w-a ma-sembe  
cl.1-bounce/impenetrable/axe-pass-fv cl.6-axe  
V + N
  - (d) **Kashakabana** (humble person)  
Kasha-kabanaa  
ka-sha ka-ba-ana  
cl.12-slave cl.12-cl.2-child  
A + N
  - (e) **Muleshachitendwe** (peaceful place)  
Mulesha-chitendwea  
mu-lesh-a ci-tendw-e  
cl.1-dodge-fv cl.7-boredom-fv  
V + A
  - (g) **Mwendapole** (slow person)  
Mwenda-pole  
mu-end-a pole  
cl.1-walk/move-fv-slowly  
V + ADV
  - (h) **Tinaleesa** (fear God)  
Tina-leesa  
Ø-tin-a leesa  
cl.1a-fear-fv god  
V + N

- (i) **Musambachime** (hard working person)  
Musamba-chimea  
mu-samb-a-ci-me  
cl.1-wash/bath-fv-cl.7-dew  
V + N
- (j) **Kanyantamanga** (self-praise in witchcraft)  
ka-nyant-a ma-anga  
cl.12-step-fv-cl.6-witchcraft  
V + N
- (k) **Musulanama** (skilled hunter)  
mu-sul-a i-nama  
cl.1-fart-fv cl.10-meat/ animals  
V + N
- (l) **Kapulamakumbi** (one who possesses supernatural powers)  
ka-pul-a ma-kumbi  
cl.12-pass through-fv cl.6-cloud/ sky  
V + N
- (m) **Tukuchiputa** (pump pot-bellied woman)  
Ø tuku-ci-puta  
cl.1a-pot-cl.7-ridge  
A + N
- (n) **Chitumbolulembo** (pot-bellied man)  
ci-tumbo lu-lembo  
cl.7-hosepipe/intestine cl.11-tattoo  
A + N
- (p) **Chumang'anga** (wealth person)  
ci-uma i-ŋanga  
cl.7-beat-cl.9-witchdoctor/ritualist (wealth person)  
V + N
- (q) **Mupingansofu** (strong person)  
mu-ping-a n-sofu  
cl.1-lift up-fv-cl.9-elephant  
V + N

The nicknames presented in example 5 are primarily phrasal compounds made up of at least two words. The most common combination is a verb followed by a noun (V+N), as seen in examples (a), (b), (c), (h), (i), (j), (k), (l), and (p). Adjective and noun combinations (A+N) represented by examples (d), (m), and (n). Additionally, there are examples of adjective and noun combinations (A+N) in (e), and verb and adverb combinations (V+ADV) in (g), respectively. Each individual word can further be analyzed into prefixes and stems, as demonstrated within the examples provided above.

#### 6.4 Sentential structures of nicknames

The study found that nicknames in Ng'umbo can take the form of sentences. Felecan (2009) refers to these as "sentence nicknames." These nicknames resemble complete sentences and can be translated into English clauses or sentences. They typically include a subject and a predicate, as demonstrated in the examples below:

- 6.
  - (a) **Mumbalafye**  
mu-n-bal-a fye  
2SM- 1OM-provoke-fv enclitic 'you provoke me'
  - (c) **Musonsombe**  
mu-sonsomb-e  
2SM-provoke- 1OM 'you provoke me'
  - (d) **Mukandufya**  
mu-ka-n-lufy-a

- 2SM-TM fut-1aOM-lose-fv ‘you will lose me’  
 (e) **Chayanamwela**  
 ci-a-y-a-na-mu-ela  
 7SM-PERF-go-fv-with-3OM-wind ‘a thing that gets easily blown away’  
 (g) **Mulele**  
 mu-lel-e  
 laSM-embrace-fv ‘you embrace’

Sentence nicknames tend to have subject and predicate as observed in example 6.

### 6.5 Proverbial structures

These are nicknames that have structures similar to proverbs (Pongweni, 1983; Matukuto, et al, 2023). They are essentially derived from proverbs and are mainly business-related names as the study has revealed. These names are often transferred to business owners in associating them with their particular businesses. These kinds of proverbs have relatively long and complex morphological structures as illustrated in the examples below:

7.  
 (a) **Talwakalumo**  
 ta-lu-aka-lu-mo  
 neg-cl.11-burn/flame-cl.11-alone/one  
 (b) **Mwambilwapatwakwe**  
 Mu-amb-ilw-a pa-tu-akwe  
 cl.1-gossip/ back bite-pass-fv cl.16-cl.13-his/her things  
 (c) **Kaciliko akaliinga pantekwe shonse**  
 ka-cilik-o a-ka-liing-a pa-n-tekwe sho-nse  
 cl.12-lid/cork/bottle top-fv aug-cl.12-fit-cl16-cl.10-sniff container- cl.10-all  
 (d) **Katyetyemwendamwalimwa**  
 ka-tyetye mu-end-a mu-a-lim-w-a  
 cl.12-bird cl1-walk-fv cl.3-cultivate/farm-pass-fv  
 (e) **Tafimbwalubiloa** ta-fi-imb-w-a lu-bilo  
 neg-cl.8-dig-pass-fv cl.11-running/quickly/fast/rapid

In example 7 (a) and (e) there is **ta-** a morpheme for negation while the prefixes are **lu-** for singular and abstract or long things (extensions) from class 11[cl.11] and **fi-** for things and actions from class 8 [cl8], respectively. Each has a -root- and a -stem- and a passive extension as a common trend in all examples [neg + pref + root + pass + fv + pref + stem]. In example 7 (c) and (d) the prefix **ka-** from class 12 [cl12] is used with the semantic value diminutive or small things singular though with praise connotation while in example 7 (b) the prefix is **mu-** from class 1 [cl.1] with ‘person’ as semantic value. Their possible specific structure is [pref + root/stem + pass + fv + pref + root/stem + pref /+pref + root/stem/ + pass + fv]. Some nicknames in this category have locative prefixes such as **pa-** (cl.16) and **mu-** (cl.18) before their stems as in example 7 (b), (c), and (d), respectively. These proverbial nicknames can be analysed as sentential nicknames even though in this context we have analyzed them as words.

### 6.6 Neologisms and Loan words nicknames

The findings indicate that youths often use a variety of neologisms and borrowed nicknames. These nicknames generally maintain the morphological structures of the original language even after being adapted into the recipient language. Many of these nicknames are nativized borrowed words, primarily from English, which have been altered. Examples of neologisms and borrowed nicknames common among youths in rural areas include terms like Nazobomba, Kilimanjaro, Waapi, Rangers, and Ijoe. These names often exhibit complex morphological structures, making them challenging to analyze and segment.

Additionally, some nicknames are simply shortened or clip forms of surnames, such as "Kb" and "Kabs" derived from "Kabaso." This practice is prevalent among the Ng’umbo youth, who are native speakers in the urban area

of Mufulira. The variations in these nicknames pose challenges for researchers attempting to analyze the specific names popular among the youth, as illustrated in the examples below:

- (a) **Kilimanjaro** (from Swahili)  
ki-lima-n-jaro  
cl.9a-mountain (nickname given to someone considered to be difficult)
- (b) **Polepole** (from Swahili)  
Ø-pole-pole  
cl.1a-pole-pole
- (c) **Waapi**  
Ø-waapi  
cl.1a-It can't happen'
- (d) **Paisoni**  
Ø-paisoni  
cl.1a-poison
- (e) **Police**  
Ø-police
- (f) cl.1a-police
- (g) **Rangers**  
Ø-ranger-s  
cl.1a-ranger-s
- (i) **Kabs or Kb**  
Ø-Kab-s  
cl.1a-kab-s
- (j) **Big Joe**  
Ø-big-joe  
cl.1a-big-joe

## 5. Conclusion

The paper analyzes Ng'umbo nicknames based on their morphological structures. Each example starts with the nickname written in the Ng'umbo script, followed by its segmentation into morphemes. A Morpheme-by-Morpheme linguistic analysis is conducted to identify the linguistic elements contained in each nickname. The various morphemes that compose these nicknames are clearly delineated.

The first part consists of the class 1 prefix and the class 1a prefix, to which all proper names belong. The second part is the nominal stem, which can be classified into three types: simplex, complex, and compound stems. Complex stems are made up of several morphemes, including a derivational morpheme, base or root, extension, and an ending or final vowel, as well as time and negative markers, depending on the word class from which a particular nickname is derived. While some derivational morphemes are highly productive, others are not. Notably, the derivational morpheme "mu-" is generally very productive in these nicknames.

Nicknames that are derived from verbs tend to have multiple morphemes—sometimes up to eight parts—while those derived from nouns typically feature mostly simplex nominal stems. More complex structures are found in nicknames that incorporate sentence and proverbial structures. These structures often include neologisms and loanwords, which maintain the morphology of their source language.

From the analysis, we can conclude that the most common noun prefixes are mu-, ka-, and chi-, which correspond to noun class 1/1a [cl1/cl1a], noun class 12 [cl12], and noun class 7 [cl7], respectively. These prefixes span the various categories of nicknames analyzed. However, for neologisms and nicknames derived from borrowed words, such as those from English, there are typically no prefixes. Such nicknames are represented by the symbol [Ø-], indicating their classification under class 1a [cl1a]. Furthermore, it has been observed that there is variation in these prefixes, as they do not adhere to a specific pattern; therefore, there is no distinct class of prefixes.

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