

The Change in Personal Names and Naming Practices in the Iraqw Speech Community

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Abstract

Personal names and naming customs have changed in the contemporary Iraqw speech community. Most members of the Iraqw speech community today bear foreign names in their formal domain. This is revealed in aspects such as official documents, hospitals, and schools. The traditional naming customs and naming ceremonies for newborns have also evolved. Prior to the implementation of these modifications, the Iraqw speech community's traditional names and naming customs were based on customary ceremonies and rituals. This descriptive qualitative study was conducted in Karatu District, Arusha Region, to analyse the reasons behind changes in personal names and naming customs within the Iraqw speech community. Although many studies, including Arega (2016), Lusekelo and Muro (2018), and Mensa et al. (2020), have examined changes in personal names across different languages, the causes of these changes in the Iraqw language have not been adequately addressed. This study was grounded by the Communication Accommodation Theory. The data for this study were collected from Iraqw native speakers from three schools and two villages in Karatu District. The two villages and their respective schools were purposefully selected because of their limited interaction with other speech communities. To achieve the study's objective, a semi-structured interview was conducted with 50 informants from the two villages. These were selected through purposive sampling, and the number was determined using the saturation principle to determine an appropriate sample size. The school register books were also reviewed from the three schools, and the collected data were analysed thematically. The study found that foreign religions, specifically Christianity and Islam, as well as the Swahili language, have had a significant influence on Iraqw names. Other factors driving changes in Iraqw names include personal preference, mispronunciation, and spelling errors. Thus, this study suggests that, since Iraqw traditional names are potential lexicons in the Iraqw language, initiatives should be taken to safeguard the remaining Iraqw traditional names.

Keywords: Change in personal names, naming practices, naming dynamics, Iraqw

1 Introduction

Tanzania is a multilingual nation with 156 native languages, including Iraqw (Muzale & Rubagumya, 2008; LoT, 2009). The Iraqw language is historically a branch of the Southern Cushitic subfamily of East Africa, specifically Tanzania, and a member of the Afro-Asiatic language family (Greenberg, 1963, as cited by Mous, 1993; Kiesling, 2000). In Tanzania, the Iraqw society is concentrated in the northern highlands, located around 3°25' and 4°30' South and 35° and 36° East longitude, which includes the Manyara Region and a portion of the Arusha Region (Mous, 1993; Alphonse, 2010, 2016). The primary economic activity for this society is agropastoralism.

Names are important language lexicons and labels assigned to sets or individual items, emphasising their significance across all speech communities (Al-Qawasmi & Al-Haq, 2016). Thus, names and naming practices are important aspects in any society worldwide. This is maintained by Chauke (2015) and Alphonse (2023) that personal naming is a universal and cultural practice, and each society in the world bestows a name to the child as an identity. Watzlawik *et al.* (2016) and Arega (2016) add that a personal name is both considered an identity and a way of distinguishing one individual from others. Agyekum (2006) adds that a personal name is a name given to a child to recognise, know, and differentiate a person from other members of the speech community. Apart from serving as an identity marker, personal names are also lexical items that convey profound information about one's circumstances of birth, sex, family hierarchy, day of birth, and the seasons of the year (Fakuade et al., 2018; Alphonse, 2023). Moreover, personal names convey the history and culture of a society in which they are used (Chauke, 2015). Additionally, African names are deeply rooted in their respective languages and cultures (Ehineni, 2019). Mutunda (2016) supports this argument by stating that, in the African context, a personal name is viewed as a message a name giver communicates to the society through the name bearer, and it is also considered a document that people read about the history and cultural heritage of a particular society in time and space. Mensah et al. (2020) support the idea that African personal names are imaginative cultural emblems that symbolise events, conflicts, or situations with strong historical resonances. Personal names thus embody a corpus of knowledge encompassing language, history, philosophy, spirituality, and worldview, among other facets of African culture. Moreover, personal names are believed to have a significant influence over their bearers' behaviour, emotions, and thoughts, as well as how other people perceive and react to them (Mensah et al., 2020; Fakuade et al., 2018).

Recently, many African societies have undergone a significant shift in personal names and naming customs. In this regard, scholars such as Arega (2016), Mensal et al. (2020), Aribowo and Herawati (2016), and Lusekelo and Muro (2018) point out that people in some societies have abandoned their traditional names and naming customs in favour of foreign and religious names, including Christian and Islamic ones. They posit that the abandonment of traditional names and naming customs has been the result of colonialism, political pressures, individual preferences, and cultural denial. For instance, Neethling (2003) argues that colonialism influenced changes in personal names within Xhosa society. Ngubane and Thabethe (2013) and Fakuade et al. (2018) report that religious influence has led to changes in personal names and naming practices. Agbontaen-Eghafona (2007) notes that African cultural commitments loosened due to social and religious imperialistic attitudes. The religious notion is that African names are challenging and do not fit into contemporary culture. These arguments significantly influenced modern African naming customs because religious imperialism compelled African societies to abandon their traditional names and naming practices. Thus, Christian followers adopted Christian names, naming, and baptism rituals instead of

traditional naming practices (Mensah et al., 2020; Arega, 2016). Similarly, Islamic naming customs and rites were embraced by people converted to Islam (Fakuade et al., 2018; Aribowo & Herawati, 2016).

Moreover, in some societies, the adoption of modern personal names and naming customs was influenced by political factors (Arega, 2016; Fakuade et al., 2018). This is supported by Arega (2016), who reports that the political pressure to abandon the use of Ethiopia's minority language led the Wolaita Society of Ethiopia to adopt religious and Amharic names and naming rituals instead of their own. Likewise, Fakuade et al. (2018) document that between the 1950s and the 1970s, the government forcibly transferred the Alune people of eastern Indonesia to the Malay speech community. According to Fakuade et al. (2018), the Alune community abandoned its traditional customs and adopted modern names from Islam, Christianity, and the Malay language. Once more, political advancements led the Batonu society to renounce its traditional names and adopt the Islamic names of the Hausa and Fulani groups (Fakuade et al., 2018).

Furthermore, Mensah et al. (2020) note that young people in modern Nigerian society are motivated to change their first names based on personal preferences, as they feel uncomfortable with the names their parents gave them. Presently, the majority of Iraqw society members are naming their children after modern religions and foreign languages. They have neither adopted names that represent their language, customs, or culture, nor adopted value-adding names in the context of their social culture. Many studies, such as those by Lusekelo and Muro (2018), Arega (2016), Fakuade et al. (2018), and Mensah et al. (2020), among others, have addressed the issue of change in personal names and naming customs across different societies. However, the area of change in personal names and naming practices in the Iraqw language has received less attention. Indeed, Alphonse (2023) studied Iraqw names, with a focus on traditional names and naming customs. Hence, this academic lacuna prompted scholars of this paper to investigate the causes of the shift in naming customs and personal names in the Iraqw society. This study is important to linguists and other scholarly communities as it brings to attention the contemporary personal names and the causes of the shift in personal names and naming customs within the Iraqw speech community.

2 Methodology

This is a qualitative study conducted in Karatu District, Arusha Region, Tanzania. The study employed purposive sampling to select participants from Masabeda and Endala villages in the Endamarariiek Ward. The study interviewed the first to the fiftieth person at which the saturation point was reached. The 50 informants were aged 25 years and above, and were native speakers of Iraqw, born, raised, and still living in Karatu District. The criteria were purposively chosen to ensure the selection of Iraqw native speakers, with minimal interaction with other speech communities. This means that the data were collected in a natural environment. The gathered data were about Iraqw names, naming customs, and the factors that led to the shift in Iraqw personal names and naming practices. Likewise, the researchers reviewed registries from three schools: Masabeda, Endala, and Manusay to check the extent of change in personal names.

The analysis of the collected data followed the thematic steps suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) as cited in Dawadi (2020). The researchers began by familiarising themselves with the data, coding it, identifying themes, revising the themes, and writing the report. Meanwhile, the researchers abided by all the research ethical principles. In this article, the reasons for the change in personal names and naming are explained through the Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) developed

by Giles (2016). The theory explains how people adapt their language to accommodate others' language when communicating, particularly in multilingual contexts, to create a welcoming atmosphere for a diverse range of speakers. CAT highlights that communication is more than just exchanging ideas; it is also about forming meaningful interactions through accommodation. According to Giles (2016) and Gudykunst (1995), this adaptation may entail adopting conversation partner-like behaviours, synchronising language and communication patterns, and conforming to non-native speaker standards in pronunciation. Concerning names and naming practices, CAT sheds light on how linguistic modifications lead to changes in given names in various cultural contexts. It demonstrates how people's linguistic adaptations mirror larger social interactions and influence the development of naming conventions. The CAT principle is evident in the observed changes in names and naming practices in the modern Iraqw speech community. For example, the Iraqw speakers who have adopted foreign religions have switched to religious names as an effort to foster connection, communication, and unification with modern religious leaders. This aligns with the Communication Accommodation Principle, which posits that meaningful communication is closely tied to interaction and accommodation among interlocutors (Giles, 2016). Dragojevic, Gasiorek, and Giles (2015) argue that long-term accommodation is a fundamental mechanism of language evolution that affects changes in name pronunciation and spelling over time, including the potential for hybrid names to emerge. Thus, due to long-term accommodation, some members of the Iraqw speech community have changed their traditional personal names and naming customs to non-native ones. The following sections present data analysis, highlighting the reasons for the change in personal names and the sources of personal names in the Iraqw society.

3 Findings and discussion

The researchers gathered 1025 names from Endala, Masabeda, and Manusay primary schools. The selection of names per school was determined by the saturation point, a point at which the researchers could no longer find new information. The researchers analysed three sets of names, including those of the students, parents, and their clans or grandparents, as seen in Table 1.

Table 1: Findings from the three schools' registers

Name of school	First names		Second name		Third name		Total
	Native	Non-native	Native	Non-native	Native	Non-native	
Endala	4	549	55	495	364	189	553
Masabeda	3	226	39	190	217	12	229
Manusay	2	241	45	198	208	35	243

Source: Field Data, 2024.

The analysis reveals that a sizeable number of students have foreign names. According to data gathered from the school registration, only 9 (0.87%) out of the 1025 (100%) names in the first column are traditional names. In the second column, 136 (13%) out of 1025 (100%) names were the traditional names. In the third column, 789 (76.97%) names out of 1025 (100%) names were traditional names. This suggests a significant shift in personal names, indicating that the practice of changing them began a long time ago and evolved gradually over time. This is supported by data from the third name column, where there is little change in personal names compared to the second and first columns, which show a continuous change of native names.

To identify the causes of the shift in personal names within the Iraqw community, the researchers conducted 50 semi-structured interviews with Iraqw native speakers in their natural settings. Most of the questions were open-ended, designed to enable respondents to provide insightful information. The interviews focused on the shift in naming customs and personal names within the Iraqw community. The findings from the semi-structured interviews indicated that factors such as the Christian religion, the Swahili language, individual preferences, mispronunciations, and incorrect spellings of names contributed to the shift in personal names and naming practices in the Iraqw society. Likewise, the scrutiny of school registry records revealed that personal names are derived mainly from foreign names in Swahili culture and modern religions, such as Islam and Christianity. This suggests that personal names have changed due to parents' and guardians' preferences, and the names being used in formal settings do not accurately represent the Iraqw language and culture. In other words, foreign names derived from religious names (Christian and Islamic) and foreign languages have replaced the traditional Iraqw names. The next sections present data, analysis and discussion of the identified contemporary name sources in Iraqw society.

3.1 Christian religion

The results showed that the Christian religion had a significant impact on the shift in personal names and naming practices in the Iraqw society. The analysis showed that many people in the Iraqw society changed their names after converting to Christianity. The analysis of the interview data revealed that 47 out of 50 informants, or 96%, attributed the name changes to the influence of the Christian religion. For instance, one of the informants, during the field interview, gave the following reasons for changing his name:

Aning' uma unawaqes niwaba/aam, bara kanisaro umu'do' kuslaika amsa takay a umu'pakanay ne o giwi. Daxaa niwaba/aam tinabatusu tari umu diniri' hanis, tay lari an umu ni tumiumis.

“I am now a born-again Christian; thus, I have changed my name because traditional Iraqw names are dark and pagan. Thus, the church forbids people from using their traditional names. A Christian name, which I currently use, was given to me right away after my baptism” (Researchers’ translation)

The quotation above supports the idea that traditional names are perceived as evil and pagan by Christian preachers. The preachers have influenced most of the Iraqw natives to believe that baptism and naming are prerequisites for a Christian's transformation from darkness to light. They have convinced them that the devil would readily torment them if they kept their identities. As a result, most of the Iraqw converts to Christianity had abandoned their traditional names. Regarding this, one informant had this to say:

Aning' bar umue o do' ukom ka inslahh tiwaidahi ne qeremoda netlame ne awa gii, asma umudu do' a koin aning' i haragamis ne inoin, sleme tam i bara saling'win kudu gii ani i ara arir asma umu doin u kom. Daxaa niwaba/aam umue unawarqes ar gidabani netlaangw, qerema tlawku ne gii kahhoo anislay aaka.

“Since my name links me to my ancestors, it is easy for the evil ancestors’ spirit to torment me when I have a traditional name. I, therefore, got saved and changed my name

to make myself invisible to the devil, demons, and spirits of my ancestors. Indeed, they cannot see me because the conduit that links us has been cut” (Researchers’ Translation).

The quotation shows that some Christians consider their Christian names as shields from evil spirits, demonic attacks and ancestral influences. This emphasises the idea that altering one’s name affects one’s social and personal identity. So, by taking on contemporary religious names, people essentially cut off their connections to ancestors and protect themselves from spiritual harm. According to the informant, having a traditional name makes people open to the devil’s influences, while taking on a new name assures them of their loyalty to Jesus and provides defence against the spirits of danger. This implies that church teachings compel Iraqw Christians to switch to non-native names. By linking traditional names with evil ancestor spirits, the teachings instil fear, leading followers to seek out names believed to be holy. As a result, the use of traditional names has decreased noticeably, while Christian names have increased in popularity. Moreover, the Iraqw parents continuously hesitate to name their children after departed family members. This is also attributed to Christianity, which claims that naming customs might pass down unwanted traits from departed family members to the offspring. In connection with this, one of the Lutheran Church members, a father of six kids, gave his viewpoint during the interview:

Ni/iee slemerow umu'er do' ng'ikonaaka, asma aslaaka dabema tlawk ng'iwa bara umuesingwa slayee. Tina do' kanisaraa intsahhamis argidabani umu'uer Iraqw ne dabema muksu umuer loo ti alkakonaa. Takay umu'ue muk uren i bademaa tlawk ne qerema netlame alwarahhamis. Asma muksu'u umu'er lo'o aning' bademoin i xuaaka, ne gar ang' na haratlintair anaxuaka sleme, an gar aning' ni/iee ng'isa umuesingi hanisika.

“I have not given any of my children traditional names because I did not want them to inherit the bad behaviour of others. The church has taught us that bad habits like drinking, theft, hooliganism, and witchcraft are passed down from one generation to the next through traditional names. Therefore, my children cannot inherit those relatives’ names because I am unaware of their behaviours and their gods” (Researchers’ Translation).

The quotation above suggests that the speaker is a member of the Lutheran Church and follows the teachings that associate traditional names with evil spirits. It is for this that he chose religious names for his children. The findings imply that the Iraqw community’s adoption of the contemporary religious names is due to religious beliefs. One of the responses from a Roman Catholic believer when asked about the reason behind the naming convention and personal name change is given below:

Aning' umu'e unawarqes niwa bara Krishaniumaridah, asma bara kanisaro umu'er do' kaslaika. Bar he kubatisumis aqo umu hesi o do' kun yahas, kuri goin ne umu dini kuri sahanis. Tam no/oo nina bar kubatisumis aqo adosing' sleme, alo o ta atetin dokanisaro aqo kudu do kanisa.

“I changed my name because the church prohibits the use of traditional names. The church leader gives you a Christian name during the baptism, after first asking your

chosen conventional name and writing it down. They also do the same to young children, and they address congregations by their Christian names” (Researchers’ Translation).

As shown in this quote, people who join the Roman Catholic Church change their names because they are not allowed to use their traditional names within the church. Both traditional and Christian names are recorded during baptism, highlighting the denomination’s embrace of traditional naming practices. Nevertheless, the church addresses its followers by their religious names. Although the Roman Catholic Church acknowledges traditional names, it conforms to the belief that Iraqw names are not fundamentally Christian. As for born-again Christians, regardless of their denomination, believers completely renounce their traditional names, thereby highlighting the profound impact of religious doctrine on naming customs.

Moreover, the above quotation highlights how members of specific Christian denominations are influenced to view traditional names negatively, leading them to advocate for their abandonment. According to Groop (2006) and Christian (2017), Christian missionaries arrived in Karatu in the 20th century. Due to this, many Iraqw native speakers who were living in Karatu at the time were converted to Christianity by these missionaries’ proclamation of the message of salvation. After accepting Jesus, those people got Christian names and were baptised. As Christianity continued to spread, most people in the community converted to Christianity and changed their names.

Adopting Christian names emphasises a change in identity, which is the main objective for followers, based on Christian scriptures and baptismal customs. Christian doctrines hold that renaming someone represents a spiritual metamorphosis and a departure from customs, that is, distancing oneself from pagan beliefs. Breaking links with customs, initiation rituals, and idol worship is a necessary part of embracing Christianity. Christian denominations, such as Pentecostal and some born-again Lutherans and Roman Catholics, emphasise that there is a link between traditional names and spiritual domains and therefore believe that following traditional customs exposes people to demonic and ancestor spirits. The Iraqw speech community, having been exposed to the teaching of modern religions, adopted foreign names, naming and the rituals of giving non-native names to newborn children or elders.

This is not unique to the Iraqw society; Mensah et al. (2020) described an analogous situation in Nigeria, where people altered their initial names to reflect their Christian faith. Many Nigerians were converted from their traditional beliefs to Christianity after the arrival of Orthodox and Pentecostal missionaries, who brought the gospel of salvation to the country during the 19th and 20th centuries. Many of them then altered their names to reflect their newfound Christian faith. Arega (2016) adds that the priest was the name-giver to the bearer when the Wolaita society in Ethiopia altered their names to reflect their Christian beliefs. Furthermore, Fakuade et al. (2018) clarify that following their conversion to Islam, the Batonu community abandoned their old names and traditions in favour of Islamic ones. This only suggests that many communities throughout the world, including the Iraqw society, have changed their names and naming customs because of religion.

3.2 The influence of the Swahili language

The analysis revealed that some members of the Iraqw language community have been Swahilised by the formal contexts, such as schools, hospitals, and workplaces. Such names include Shauri, Upendo, Safari, and other Swahilized names, such as Joni, Vitalisi, Karani, and Paskali. During the

interview, 40 out of 50 informants, which is equal to 80%, responded that the majority of the Iraqw community members were aware of and found the Swahili orthography to be simple. The reason for this is that schools teach Swahili orthography, but not Iraqw orthography. As a result, Iraqw orthography is unfamiliar to both non-native speakers and most native speakers of the Iraqw language. This prompts a switch from traditional names to Swahilised names on the grounds of the simplicity of the orthography. One of the informants gave evidence for the influence of Swahili on the Iraqw naming as follows:

Muk yari tsifri Kiswahili ga loir xu'u asma ka insla'ahh, ne kar loa ar axwees, tam ni/iiren awanawk sleme ng'in ar axwesir. Daxaa Kiswahili adorqa'a muk yari ng'iwaxui, m'u umu'er Kiswahili gana a/ansu'u tsatingo'dir ni/iin, asma ka'inslahha goiro ne ateningo, tam he tsifrir Iraqw gaxuaka sleme ga aslay goiro. Umu'er Kiswahili ka inslahh, ar Iraqw ka gawden loa ale dir mukdu tsifri' hatlae.

“Many people know and speak Swahili because it is an easy language, and even our younger children can speak it. Since many people know how to write in Swahili, currently, parents give their children Swahilised names allegedly because they are easy to write and pronounce, unlike Iraqw names, which are often challenging to write and pronounce” (Researchers’ Translation).

The above excerpt demonstrates that most Iraqw society members are proficient in both spoken and written Swahili, which influences their naming practices. The argument aligns with Swilla (2000) and Lusekelo (2020), who suggest that Swahili is a dominant language in Tanzania. It serves as a lingua franca across various domains, including hospitals, schools, churches, higher learning institutions, courts, and marketplaces, and is spoken by most Tanzanians. They add that due to its widespread use, services are predominantly offered in Swahili, and children learn and use it as a medium of instruction in schools. Therefore, it has permeated all aspects of society and thus become easier for contemporary Iraqw people to adopt its aspects, including its naming system.

The arguments reveal how parents choose Swahili names over native names for their children. Most Iraqw natives are familiar with Swahili graphemes, which leads to the adoption of Swahilised names. Iraqw people find Swahili phonemes easier to use compared to Iraqw phonemes. Batibo (2005) supports the argument that Swahili, being the dominant language, has a greater influence on the minority Iraqw language than any counterforce. Due to this imbalance, Swahili is more prevalent and has led to a recent rise in the number of Iraqw people’s names. Some of the Swahili/Swahilised names adopted by the contemporary Iraqw society are Tatu, Zawadi, Jumanne, Fikiri, Arusha, Shauri, Karani, Vitalis, Safari, and Mawazo. It is interesting to notice that names like Moshi and Arusha were once place names but are now used for people. This suggests that Swahili has a considerable influence on the contemporary names of the Iraqw.

Lusekelo and Muro (2018) found, like in the Iraqw society, that the Machame-Chagga of Kilimanjaro would equally prefer Swahilised names for their children rather than the traditional Machame names. This is because Swahili is widely used as a lingua franca in Tanzania, and most speakers of Iraqw are conversant in both written and spoken forms of the language. This illustrates the broader influence of dominant languages on traditions surrounding personal naming in minority language societies.

The result aligns with Arega (2016), who reported a similar phenomenon in contemporary Wolaita society in Ethiopia, where individuals adopted Amharic names due to the greater influence of the Amharic language over the Wolaita language. In a similar vein, Mensah et al. (2020) observed that some modern Nigerians choose English names because of the widespread popularity of English over their native languages. The pattern illustrates how powerful languages have an impact on local languages.

3.3 Personal taste or interest

The data analysis indicates that changing one's name is primarily influenced by personal preference in the modern Iraqw language community. Mensah et al. (2020) describe personal taste as an individual's choice or preference about their name. In contemporary Iraqw society, parents choose names more often according to personal taste than taking traditional connotations into account. Even while some parents may not know the significance of the names selected, they nevertheless find them endearing. For example, some names were derived from politicians, including Barack Obama, the former US president, and Wilbrod, the former Karatu Member of Parliament. Other names were adopted from gospel singers, like Rose, Travis, and Boni. Conscientiously, some parents selected these names in the hope that their children would achieve success like those of their role models. The pattern illustrates how individual preferences influence naming customs in contemporary Iraqw society. The informants' response below indicates that the adoption of contemporary personal names is heavily influenced by personal preference:

Qart'i deemaka umu'er /aben ar tsifri hatla'a ga loowaslaa igumisuwo, umue toin ne tsifriro ng'iloir waqaqair. Bahhale ni/iin ng'a umu'er 43u kia tleri' hanisir, ar gidabani ni/iin binda urarayee' sleme i ador muksi iatle'r tlehharutir. Slaqas umu Baraka a kudu Obamawoke, ne kudu Wilbodi, a kundu ang' o gitladu mbunge. Ne umuer dauser injili a ador tidar Rozi, Trivisi, Boni.

“Instead of using their conventional names, this generation likes to copy and paste the names of their interests from other languages to their children. Some parents have named their children after leaders' names, for example, Baraka from Barack who was the president of the US, Wilbrodi, from Wilbrod who was the Karatu MP, and artists, realizing names such as Rozi, Travis, Boni, and other famous people, thinking that their children will follow in the footsteps of the name bearers and become wealthy and well-known” (Researchers' Translation).

This excerpt suggests that Iraqw speakers currently give more preference to the names of leaders and artists than to customary naming practices. As such, traditional and cultural naming norms based on specific situations or seasons are gradually diminishing. Consequently, local names are now primarily used informally within families, rather than in official settings. This implies that people's free and independent naming decisions may lead to a disconnection between names and the cultural history associated with them.

The study's analysis reveals that naming practices in the Iraqw cultural community have changed from being based on social functions, seasons, and places of birth. Instead, parents now choose names for their children based on their preferences. On the other hand, elderly people who adopted Christianity also chose names that reflected their interests. As a result, contemporary Iraqw personal

names no longer represent past customs and sociocultural experiences. The finding is consistent with Aribowo and Herawati (2016), who observed that members of modern Javanese society adopted names from Arab culture after converting to Islam, often at the expense of their traditional Javanese names. Similarly, Mensah et al. (2020) found that some individuals in Nigeria chose their own names rather than accepting the customary names given to them by their parents. This suggests a more widespread tendency in which modernisation is influencing cultural identity and personal naming customs in various societies.

3.4 Mispronunciation and incorrect spelling

The study found mispronunciation as a pivotal factor influencing the evolution of personal names within the Iraqw speech community. People tend to deviate from customary naming conventions by altering the sounds, structures, and written forms of names to conform to the linguistic norms of the dominant language or cultural context. Dali et al. (2022) note that mispronunciation and improper spelling of names can erode one's sense of identity and evoke feelings of marginalisation, undervaluation, isolation, and language difficulties. Mensah et al. (2020) support that mispronouncing names can lead to animosity, nervousness, and social disengagement.

The analysis in this study reveals instances in contemporary Iraqw speech communities where non-native speakers often mispronounce individuals' traditional names. These incidents occur more frequently in formal settings, such as churches, companies, hospitals, and schools, where interactions with non-native speakers are most common. Based on his own experience, an elderly man reported that even his medical acquaintances mispronounced his name, as supported by this quote:

Molqar' ee umu'ue o do' ngun lo'owa dakumisir. Aning' umu'e a Daqro, Molqamoe koko gar'ir ateti'n a Dakaro, o'hatlaa gar'ir atetin a Lazaro. Muki gar umue'ng'us dakumis iya/amut sauti 'q' bara tsifrir doin'e i'kahh. An gar'ng'is aleslaslay'aka. Aluo umu'e unawarqes, daxa ham'i umue a Lazaro.

“My name is mispronounced by my friends. Although my name is Daqro, one of my friends calls me Dakaro, and another calls me Lazaro, which means I have an entirely new name. This could be the result of their language not having the sound **q**, which makes it difficult for them to pronounce it. I eventually had to change my name, and now I go by Lazaro” (Researchers’ translation).

The above quote illustrates how language barriers significantly impact communication and one's sense of identity. The choice to use Lazaro illustrates a practical strategy for easing communication and highlights the value of flexibility in negotiating linguistic differences. The finding proves that individuals from the Iraqw language community often change the pronunciation of their names to match that of non-native speakers as a means of simplification. For instance, /Hhawu/ becomes /hawu/, /Ni/ima/ becomes /niima/, and /Sla/a/ becomes /silaa/. To simplify pronunciation for non-native speakers, this change risks altering the pronunciation and potentially erasing the distinctive Iraqw sound. The finding vividly illustrates how someone's continuous mispronunciation of a name drove the name bearer to seek a change for more straightforward pronunciation. This is supported by Giles (2016), who states that people adjust language and communication styles for synchronisation and conform pronunciation to non-native speakers' norms.

Additionally, another participant brought to attention the fact that non-native speakers often miswrite Iraqw names because they are unfamiliar with some Iraqw sounds. The following is a quote from his observation:

Muuk yari o' Irqwarok'a umu'er Iraqw ga loa hhititin goir'o ne atetingo. Slaqas mwalimu bara shule umu' ako doren gunadakus goiro qomar umu' dasir 'er ng'uwagoin do' shulero. Umu'u akodoren a Qashan, Mwalimu bara goiro gar a goini a Kwashan, aning'adoda ng'iwa ar mwalimu unabaw umu'u akodoren adorkur goin are adosingeka. Alo analaqam ador umu'u ako' kurgoin.

“Many people miswrite Iraqw names, especially non-Iraqws. For instance, when registering my daughter for school, a teacher miswrote my father's name. Rather than writing Qashan, she wrote Kwashan. When I realised it, I had to go back to school to guide the teacher in writing the name” (Researchers’ Translation) correctly.

This instance illustrates how misspellings affect personal names within the Iraqw community, leading to name changes, as evident in the incorrect spelling of Qashan as Kwashan. Accordingly, the researchers gathered misspelt personal names from both schools and the village register book, as listed in Table 2.

Table 2: Misspelt Iraqw personal names

Original Spelling	Misspelt	Changes
/Awaki	Awaki	Dropping /
/Alay	Alay	Dropping /
Bo/ay	Boay or Boho	Dropping /, strange substitution of -ay with ho
Bee'e	Bee	Dropping '
Si'ma	Sima	Dropping '
Hhayuma	Hayuma	Changing hh to h
Hhoki	Hoki	Changing hh to h
Qashan	Kwashan Kashan	or Changing q to kw or k
Qamu	Kamu	Changing q to k
Sla/a	Silaa	Changing sl to si and dropping /
Xumay	Humay	Changing x to h
Axweso	Akweso	Changing x to k
Tsafu	Safu	Changing ts to s
Tsere	Sere	Changing ts to s
Matle	Mate	Changing tl to t
Thlwa	Tuwa or Tuluway	Changing tl to t and inserting extra grapheme

The data in Table 2 shows that both non-native and some native speakers often write Iraqw personal names inaccurately due to their lack of knowledge of the graphemes. As demonstrated in Table 2, names such as 'Bo/ay' become 'Boay,' which illustrates the dropping of specific graphemes or replacing them with equivalents, and the introduction of irregular forms. Two key findings stand out: Firstly, there is a consistent omission of graphemes representing the glottal stop /ʔ/ (written as ') and the pharyngealised plosive /ʕ/ (written as /) in a written discourse of personal names due to

the lack of equivalence conventions in Swahili and English. Secondly, there is a propensity for simplification, frequently involving vowel insertions and splitting of double graphemes. Here, Iraqw graphemes are replaced with their Swahili and English equivalents as seen in the given examples: 'ts' for 's', 'hh' for 'h', 'tl' for 't', 'sl' for 's', 'q' for 'k' or 'kw', and 'x' for 'h'. The study also found that the absence of capital letters for the glottal stop ʔ and pharyngeal ʕ complicates their use in Iraqw orthography, making it awkward to start names with symbols like ' for /ʔ/ and / for /ʕ/.

Simplification techniques can result in the misspelling of Iraqw personal names due to a lack of understanding of Iraqw graphemes and the absence of comparable graphemes in languages such as English and Swahili. Misspelt names are common on many written platforms, including school register books. This situation is made worse by the fact that schools do not teach the Iraqw language, which means that many natives and most non-natives do not have the knowledge needed to write Iraqw names correctly. The absence of direct Roman counterparts for some consonant sounds, mixed with a lack of literacy and writing experience, makes it difficult to pronounce and write Iraqw names appropriately. For example, non-native speakers find it challenging to pronounce Iraqw sounds because some sounds are absent in their native languages. When introducing oneself to non-native speakers, Iraqw people pronounce their names to ensure intelligibility and to make the names easier to pronounce. During the field interview, native speakers gave a list of names whose sounds have no direct equivalents in contact languages, leading to frequent mispronunciation by non-native speakers. The list is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Mispronounced Iraqw personal names

Original Sound	Mispronounced	Changes
/ʕawaki/	/awaki/	Dropping /ʕ/
/beeʔe/	/bee/	Dropping /ʔ/
/siʔma/	/sima/	Dropping /ʔ/
/hayuma/	/hayuma/	Changing /ħ/ to /h/
/hoki/	/hoki/	Changing /ħ/ to /h/
/qashan/	/kwashan or Kashan/	Changing q/ to /kw/ or /k/
/qamu/	/kamu/	Changing /q/ to /k/
/ʔaʕa/	/silaa/	Changing /ʔ/ to /s/ and dropping /ʕ/
/xumay/	/humay/	Changing /x/ to /h/
/axweso/	/akweso/	Changing /x/ to /k/
/tsafu/	/safu/	Changing /ts/ to /s/
/tsere/	/sere/	Changing /ts/ to /s/
/matle/	/mate/ or /matile/	Changing /tʃ/ to /t/ or inserting a vowel to break a consonant cluster tʃ
/thuwa/	/tuwa/ or /tuluway/	Changing /tʃ/ to /t/ or inserting a vowel to break a consonant cluster tʃ

Table 3 shows the cases in which the pharyngealised plosive /ʕ/ and the glottal stop sound /ʔ/ are not capitalised because they are represented as symbols and their orthography is not familiar to many users. The pharyngeal fricative sound /ħ/ is replaced with /h/, the palatal ejective fricative sound /tʃ/ is replaced with /t/, and vowels are inserted to separate clusters. Moreover, the velar fricative /x/ is replaced with /h/ or /k/, and the alveolar ejective affricate /ts/ is replaced with /s/. The ovular stop

sound /q/ is replaced with /k/ or /kw/, and the alveolar lateral fricative /ɬ/ is replaced with /s/ or by inserting vowels to break the consonant cluster.

The analysis suggests that the mispronunciation of Iraqw personal names contributes to the observed changes in personal names within the Iraqw society. It shows that individuals adapt their names to avoid phonotactic constraints in contact languages. Nonetheless, the accommodation leads to changes in pronunciation and spelling of Iraqw names.

A similar finding is reported by Mensah et al. (2020), who conducted a study in Nigeria and found cases where people changed their names because non-native speakers had difficulty pronouncing and writing them correctly. As a result of their irritation with the frequent corrections, some individuals decided to simplify their names to prevent further mistakes, as it made them feel alienated and discriminated against (Holbrook, 2017). In Ethiopia (Arega, 2016) and among the Batonu society in Nigeria (Fakuade et al., 2018), name changes are influenced by political and economic circumstances. Overall, alterations in personal names gradually dilute the unique phonetic characteristics of the Iraqw language and cultural identity. In this regard, there is a need for devising ways to preserve authentic grammar and spelling, which is crucial for safeguarding the linguistic distinctiveness of the Iraqw language.

4 Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that personal names have evolved from traditional to modern forms. In traditional Iraqw society, names were derived from numerous factors, including the circumstances of a child's birth, the seasons of the year, the duration of the day, and the local fauna and flora. In contrast, the results from the school's registers indicate that names in modern Iraqw society are derived from the Swahili language or rather are influenced by the Swahili language and foreign religions (Christianity and Islam). The analysis of the school's registry reveals that, in the column of clan or grandparent's names, 789 (76.97%) out of 1025 (100%) names were traditional, and in the column of parents' names, 136 (13%) out of 1025 (100%) names were traditional. In the column of first names or students' names, 9 (0.87%) out of 1025 (100%) names were traditional names. This demonstrates how personal names are changing from traditional to foreign in contemporary Iraqw society. The study's findings revealed factors influencing the change in personal names within the contemporary Iraqw speech community, including mispronunciation and improper spelling, the Christian religion, the Swahili language, and personal taste. Considering these findings, the study suggests that urgent measures be taken, including the documentation of these customs for future reference. Furthermore, the Iraqw society should be made aware of the importance of preserving its traditional names, languages, and cultures to maintain its identity, pride, and continuity.

5 References

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