

A morphological analysis of Sukuma place names: A case of primary school names in Shinyanga, Tanzania

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Abstract: Place names are vital language forms as they are entrenched with data about their ethnic origins. They are crucial linguistic, historical, geographical, and socio-cultural data sources. A growing body of evidence suggests that place names have been studied mainly from a semantic standpoint. Studies focusing on the morphological analysis of place names are limited. This denies onomasticians access to knowledge regarding the structures and processes forming place names in many languages. This paper examines the morphological aspects of Sukuma place names, mainly names of primary schools in Shinyanga Rural District, Shinyanga Region, Tanzania, to uncover their underlying structural patterns and the word-formation processes. The data for this study were 125 names of primary schools found in the Shinyanga Rural District, collected through the documentary review method. The collected names were subjected to morphological analysis by decomposing them into constituent morphemes to establish their structures and word formation processes. The findings indicate that Sukuma place names minimally consist of a noun or verb stem, though most are composed of a prefix and a noun or verb stem. The study further establishes that Sukuma speakers use inflection, derivation, and compounding strategies to form place names. The results of this study support the view that names, like other words in a language, have elaborate linguistic structures that can be analysed morphologically. It is concluded that the structure of place names is as significant as the motivational factors for place naming in determining or contributing to the meaning of a place name.

Keywords: Morphological analysis, Naming, Place names, Shinyanga, Sukuma

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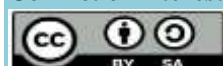
1. Introduction

Naming is a significant element of people's social identity (Mensah & Mekamgoum, 2017). Naming is a widespread practice unique to humans; it bestows identity markers on living and non-living objects. It is vital for referential and identity purposes (Nhongo & Tshotsho, 2021). Names are studied under a branch of semantics called Onomastics. It studies the "origins, meaning, and science of names" (Omolara, 2021:265), and it has two major branches: *toponomastics*, which deals with place names, and *anthroponomastics*, which deals with personal names in their totality (Al-Zumor, 2009; Mandende, 2009; Mutunda, 2016). This paper focuses on place names (henceforth PNs). PNs constitute a word category with special morphology, syntax, and semantics (Burenhult, 2008). They form a portion of the vocabulary of every human language. This paper concentrates on the morphological analysis of PNs in Sukuma to establish their structural composition and the word-formation processes responsible for their formation.

Scholarly interest in studying the morphology of PNs in Sukuma emanates from at least two reasons. First, it arises from the conviction that PNs, as part of the vocabulary of every human language, are not words without analysable morphology and are a product of some morphological processes operating in a language. This belief was catalysed by a

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call for more thorough studies on indigenous and foreign PNs used in African countries, Tanzania included (Dalby, 1984). The current paper was motivated by Buberwa's (2016) study on the morphology of Swahili and Ruhaya PNs. Buberwa recommended that PNs in other languages (Sukuma included) should be studied from, among other things, a morphological perspective. This suggests that the morphological aspects of PNs in numerous languages, including Sukuma, are still unexamined. Second, the interest originated from the scarcity of toponomastic studies in Sukuma. The previous onomastic studies (Athanas, 2019; Lusekelo & Manyasa, 2022; Manyasa, 2009; Shigini, 2020; Shigini & Mapunda, 2023) have all focused on personal names, not PNs in the language under study. This deficiency thus reveals that different aspects of PNs (for example, morphology) in Sukuma remain uninvestigated. This implies that the status quo regarding the morphology of Sukuma PNs is not known due to the lack of a detailed linguistic account. The structure of PNs is key in deciphering their first-level meanings.

PNs are widely appreciated as storehouses of knowledge about a particular locality (Mtavangu, 2019). In this case, PNs tend to outlast the language or culture from which they are drawn (Herrick, 1983; Mtavangu, 2019). PNs are a storehouse of the past, which gratify two wants: existential and political. Existentially, PNs speak to the uncontrollable desire within people to proclaim identity (Ndletyana, 2012). The author adds that PNs are external indicators of how humans perceive themselves regarding their value system and history. Commenting on the vitality of PNs, David (2011:215) avers that PNs are "not only linguistic signs; they also represent social and historical values. They are created due to humans' need to name their environment and reflect a person's relationship with a particular place." Through PNs, language contact, social, physical, and cultural exchange ensued between speakers of diverse indigenous languages are revealed (Möller, 2018). In short, PNs are "a special part of our cultural heritage in that they tell us something about the place to which they refer and about the name givers" (Helleland, 2012:101).

The study of PNs represents a huge interdisciplinary field of inquiry. PNs are a source of linguistic, geographical, historical, and socio-cultural data (Zeini et al., 2018). PNs contain information about their ethnic origins in a similar fashion people's names carry traces of ethnic origin (Senekal, 2019). Although it seems that PNs are usually taken for granted as they have always existed, and most of them remain completely undocumented (Akpan & Akpan, 2013), they are a crucial element of our intangible inheritance. The reason is that "Many place names are also identified with past events and are pegs upon which stories both written and oral can be hung" (Helleland, 2012: 101). PNs echo society's social, economic, religious, and historical aspects (Jenjekwa, 2021). Mamvura et al. (2017) add that PNs are cultural symbols projecting language speakers' expectations, aspirations, worries, and general belief systems. PNs manifest as a single word or combinations of words to designate, signify, and identify the named places and their position relative to other places (Zeini et al., 2018). Morphologically, this suggests that PNs comprise one word or a blend of words.

Despite the cultural and historical significance of PNs, there is limited scholarly attention given to the morphological analysis of PNs in many languages in Tanzania, including Sukuma. This paper investigates the linguistic dimension of Sukuma PNs. Specifically, it examines the morphological aspects of Sukuma PNs to uncover their underlying structural patterns and the word-formation processes involved. The paper seeks to answer two questions: (1) how are Sukuma PNs morphologically structured? (2) what morphological processes are responsible for forming Sukuma PNs? An understanding of the morphology of PNs is crucial in knowing how they came into being.

2. Literature review

Globally, efforts to examine PNs have been made. For instance, Kalkanova (1999) studied English PNs by focusing on their semantics in England. The findings show that PNs contain some meanings; they refer to people, communities, family relations, or the status of people in a particular community and that every village, street, town, or city has a distinct name. Nicolaisen (1993) examined Scottish PNs in Scotland as evidence for language change. The paper claims that PNs that are lexically opaque are more likely to reflect changes in pronunciation earlier than words, the lexical meaning of which is well known. In Australia, Nash (2013) investigated the meaning of PNs on four islands. The results reveal that PNs are a product of different sociolinguistic issues, particularly the history and ecology of society. Though he was less concerned with morphological issues of PNs, Nash hinted that PNs manifest themselves in a compound structural pattern. PNs comprising a combination of two or more words are also found in Sukuma (see the results section). While these studies generally focused on the meaning of PNs, the current study takes a departure and focuses on the morphological aspects of PNs.

Scholars such as Dalby (1984) and Buhnen (1992) took a general view of PNs as they never focused on a particular language(s). Dalby (1984) studied the link between the names of tribes and PNs of African origin. The study shows that PNs are good historical data sources, particularly about the migration of various African communities from one area to another. The author continues to say that PNs, such as names of rivers and mountains, provide data about languages that were spoken in a particular area. Moreover, people who migrate to other areas tend to rename those areas with names from their languages. It is shown that some PNs come from people's names, and sometimes PNs may be personal names. Equally, clan names may be personal names, and at the same time, clan names may be PNs. Buhnen (1992) investigated the connection that exists between PNs and history. Emphasising PNs being a good source of historical data, Buhnen explains that PNs are an important and good way of storing the history of a society. The author argues that using PNs as historical data sources is better and cheaper than using archaeological methods.

Much of the available literature in Africa is on personal names, not PNs. Nevertheless, some scholars have paid attention to studying PNs in different countries. In Cuba, Waibel (1943) investigated PNs as an example of the natural vegetation of Cuba. The study probed the reason the area of the country is known by the name Savana 'sabana', a name that signifies an area without trees, while it is well-known that Cuba is a forest-rich country. The study demonstrates that the word 'Savana' was coined by the colonialists who ruled Cuba to mean the forests found in Cuba differed from those in their home country; so, they regarded Cuba as a country without forests. This claim is based on the fact that many PNs

in Cuba relate to vegetation, plants, and forests. Generally, the study reveals the historical and geographical treasures hidden in Cuba's PNs.

In South Africa, Mojapelo (2009), Raper and Möller (2015) and Möller (2018) investigated PNs. Mojapelo (2009) examined the morphological aspects of Sesotho PNs and found that Sesotho PNs are morphologically grouped into four: those without locative markers, those with the prefix *ga-*, those with the prefix *bo-*, and those with the suffix *-ng*. The author also explains that Sesotho PNs result from affixation, compounding, and reduplication processes. Raper and Möller (2015) explored the extent to which socio-physical and language contact processes had played a role in the coining of PNs. The paper shows that many Herero place name elements correspond to Bushman words in sound and meaning. Möller (2018) studied multilingual PNs and observed that many South African PNs depict the cultural and language contacts between Bushmen, Khoikhoi, Bantu, and European language speakers over many years. This gives insights into the interlinked, multilingual context and depicts PNs as verifiable evidence of lexemic and toponymic exchange.

In Zimbabwe, Mamvura et al. (2017) investigated the identity construction capacity of PNs. The study reveals that PNs are icons of identity and symbolic representations of a people's memory and belonging. They are concepts beyond the physical dimension as they are discursively constructed. Jenjekwa (2021) examined the post-2000 revitalisation of Shona places. The study demonstrates that despite their numerical inferiority, the revitalised PNs symbolize the restoration of agency to the indigenous people. The study attests that PNs are crucial in reviving and conserving African indigenous knowledge systems (IKS). In Egypt, Zeini et al. (2018) studied the PNs in the Sinai Peninsula. The aim was to classify the collected names based on their meanings to know the reasons behind place naming. The results reveal that most PNs are descriptive of where they belong in whole or part.

Anindo (2016) and Mandillah (2022) studied PNs in Kenya. Anindo (2016) studied the meanings and morphology of Lulogooli PNs. The study shows that Lulogooli PNs are primarily derived, inflected, and compounded. This implies that they are mainly formed through derivation, inflection, and compounding processes. The study also indicates that Lulogooli PNs, generally, have referential meanings and are derived from prominent persons, unique deaths, water sources, pioneers or clans, local insects, plants or trees, local terrain, and description of characteristics of a place. Mandillah (2022) examined the morphosyntax and semantics of Luhya PNs through a structural and functional approach. The results show that Luhya PNs are formed via grammatical rules that emanate from word transformations. The paper shows further that Luhya PNs are primarily formed through compounding, borrowing, and prefixation processes. In terms of their semantics, Luhya PNs have transparent and descriptive roles. Luhya PNs originate from historical events, prominent people, topographical features, and climatic conditions. Generally, it can be observed from these studies that the meaning of PNs is what has dominated the attention of many scholars in Africa, leaving the morphological aspects of PNs unattended. This situation can be ascribed to the claims made by linguists such as Habwe and Karanja (2007) and Agard (1984) that proper nouns (PNs included) are composed of roots only, so they cannot be analysed morphologically. This implies that proper nouns are regarded as words made up of only one morpheme.

In Tanzania, studies about PNs are scarce. Buberwa (2010, 2012, 2016) is the only scholar who devoted maximum attention to PNs. Buberwa (2010) investigated Ruhaya PNs by considering their sociolinguistic meanings. The study indicated that the meanings of the PNs collected relate to plants, famous people, animals, people's habits, and important events that affected society. Nevertheless, the study did not address the morphological aspects and processes forming Ruhaya PNs. In 2012, Buberwa studied the sociolinguistic meaning of Ruhaya PNs. Her study was premised on the assumption that PNs are not random labels but are associated with specific social-cultural phenomena like village heroes, persons who made outstanding contributions to society, events considered unique, or people who had achieved particular notoriety. The author avers that all these are echoed in what the PNs were derived from at the appropriate time and place. The findings reveal that Ruhaya PNs have meanings derived from phenomena that include names of events, fauna and flora, crops raised, unique people, habitation data, natural terrain, and activities conducted in the area to which the name is bestowed. The results show further that Ruhaya PNs have meanings associated with different human body parts like the tongue, breast, heart, hip, and nape.

Moreover, in 2016, Buberwa examined the morphology of Swahili and Haya PNs within the Haya community. The findings indicate that PNs in the two languages comprise one word or a combination of words. The paper confirms that PNs comprise unique elements and can be analysed morphologically. Even though PNs are derived from different sociolinguistic factors, PNs are not randomly selected, as other scholars noted. Different word formation processes are involved in the formation of PNs. Finally, the author recommends that studies of a similar nature should be done in other languages and examine PNs from morphological, syntactic, sociolinguistic, or semantic standpoints.

Other scholars who have examined PNs in Tanzania include Schotsman (2003) and Yonazi (2014). Schotsman (2003) studied the Kiswahili PNs, particularly Dar es Salaam city bus stops, to identify bus stop names with their original meanings. The author explains that the names of bus stops in the said city emanate from the names of people who lived close to such bus stops. It is further explained that other names are derived from big trees, natural features, and different events in those places. The author gives examples of bus stop names like *Magarisaba* 'seven cars', derived from an accident involving seven cars, and *Mwembeni* (at a mango tree), derived from the presence of a mango tree. Yonazi (2014) investigated Chasu PNs and their meanings in the Chasu speech community. The results revealed that Chasu PNs are embedded with meanings that stem from the names of people, clans, animals, plants, and insects. Other meanings stem from different notable events. The findings demonstrate further that Chasu PNs are not given randomly; sociolinguistic criteria like notable events and physical features/climatic conditions are considered. Other PNs are given from other communities that had relationships with Chasu. Also, results indicate that Chasu PNs have changed from one historical period to another, and the changes are total name change and pronunciation change.

From the literature review on PNs, one notices the following: first, studies on PNs are still very scanty; most of the available literature focuses on personal names, not PNs. Second, the majority of studies available on PNs concern the

nature and meanings of PNs (Kalkanova, 1999; Nash, 2013; Nicolaisen, 1993; Schotsman, 2003; Yonazi, 2014; Zeini et al., 2018) or the history of PNs (e.g. Dalby, 1984; Schotsman, 2003) while a few have studied the morphology of PNs and the processes involved in their formation (Anindo, 2016; Buberwa, 2016; Mandillah, 2022; Mojapelo, 2009). As earlier said, studies on PNs involving Tanzanian languages (Sukuma included) are scanty. Consequently, no sufficient empirical data exists about the various aspects of PNs, including their morphology. This denies onomasticians access to knowledge regarding PNs' structural composition and word formation processes in numerous languages. Moreover, the available scholarship on proper nouns (PNs included) shows contrasting views: some scholars (Agard, 1984; Habwe & Karanja, 2007) regard proper nouns as words composed of only one morpheme (roots), so they cannot be analysed morphologically, and other scholars (Anindo, 2016; Buberwa, 2016; Mandillah, 2022; Mojapelo, 2009) view proper nouns as words made up of different morphemes, hence they can be analysed morphologically. Thus, detailed research focusing on language specificity is required to establish whether or not PNs have analysable morphology since PNs are words of a particular language and languages are diverse.

2.1. Theoretical standpoint

This study is informed by the assumptions of Lexical Morphology (LM) theory by Kiparsky (Kiparsky, 1982). LM as a theory was then advanced by Katamba (1993) and Katamba and Stonham (2006) (Katamba, 1993; Katamba & Stonham, 2006). LM is a generative and deductive theory that recognises the level of morphology as a specific level of language. The main idea of LM theory is that words can be analysed as consisting of smaller, meaning-bearing units called morphemes. These morphemes can be combined systematically to form new words, and the new word's meaning can often be derived from its constituent morphemes. This implies that LM recognises that words in a language, of which PNs are part, are formed by attaching morphemes to roots or stems. The LM theory also emphasises the importance of understanding the internal structure of words and how that structure relates to their meanings and functions in language. In this way, LM explains the systematic relations between words with similar morphological components. Moreover, the theory clarifies that the level of morphology as part of language is hierarchically ordered in levels (Katamba & Stonham, 2006). This suggests that the affixes attached to root or stem words to form new words are arranged in levels, one level below the other.

The primary method used in LM is the morphological analysis in which words (including PNs) are decomposed into small, functionally meaningful lexical units with readable grammatical meanings (Mwangi, 2015). Mwangi adds that PNs are part of every language's vocabulary, so their morphology is expected to follow the overall pattern of each language. LM theory is based on the morpheme-based approach (item-and-arrangement) that recognises the morpheme as the basic morphological analysis unit. This approach views words as a collection of individual morphemes strung together like beads on a thread. According to LM, the word formation process is a product of the interaction between morphological and phonological rules operating in a lexicon. Morphological rules determine the structure of a word, and phonological rules determine its pronunciation (Katamba & Stonham, 2006). As part of every language's vocabulary, PNs thus exhibit a morphology that is expected to follow the overall pattern of each language. The current paper dwells on the morphological rules, especially the rules of word formation, to guide morphological analyses of PNs. Word formation rules bring the morphological processes (inflection, derivation, compounding, and many more) to the surface (Mwangi, 2015). Therefore, LM theory is suitable for investigating the morphological structures of Sukuma PNs since it primarily concerns forming words and the processes responsible.

2.2. Sukuma noun classes

Since the current paper aims to study the morphology of Sukuma PNs and the processes responsible for their formation, it is thus crucial to briefly describe the noun class system in Sukuma. The reason is that noun class prefixes are a crucial component in the structure of most PNs. PNs are assumed to be nouns and are thus expected to demonstrate features of nouns, including noun prefixes, as shown in the findings and discussions section. Noun classes are one of the most salient features of Bantu languages (Sukuma included). Nouns in Bantu languages are classified into many noun classes. The number of noun classes differs across Bantu languages, but 18 noun classes are apparent in Sukuma. The eighteen (18) noun classes cluster into 18 different genders or singular/plural pairings (Maho, 1999; Matondo, 2003), as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Sukuma Noun Classes

Class	Aug.	Prefix	Stem	Example	Gloss	Semantic field
1	o-	m-	Nhu	omu:nhu	person	human
2	a-	βa-	Nhu	aβa:nhu	people	human
3	o-	m-	Ti	omti	tree	plant/object
4	i-	mi-	Ti	imti	trees	plants/objects
5	i-	li-	We	iliwe	stone	argumentative
6	a-	ma-	We	Amawe	stones	things/animals
7	i-	ji-	Looti	ijilo:ti	dream	object
8	i-	ji-	Looti	ijilo:ti	dreams	objects
9	i-	n-	Buli	imbuli	goat	thing/animal
10	i-	n-	Buli	imbuli	goats	things/animals
11	o-	lu-	Goye	olugoye	rope	long/thin object
12	a-	ka-	Ana	Akaana	a small child	diminutive

13	o-	to-	Ana	otwana	small children	diminutive
14	o-	βo-	Saatu	oβos:atu	sickness	abstract entities
15	o-	go-	Cha	ogocha	dying	verbal infinitive
16	a-	ha-	Nuumba	ahanu:mba	on the house	location
17	o-	go-	Nuumba	ogonu:mba	at the house	location
18	o-	mo-	Nuumba	omonu:mba	in the house	location

Source: Adopted from Matondo (2003)

Table 1 indicates that Sukuma noun classes cluster into singular/plural pairings. For instance, the noun classes in singular/plural pairs include 1/2, 3/4, and 5/6. However, there are exceptions with some noun classes, such as classes 15, 16, 17, and 18, which never appear with their counterparts. Classes 9, 14, and 15 have their plural counterparts in class 6, while class 11 has its plural counterpart in class 10 (Luhende, 2018). In Bantu languages, the classification of nouns into different classes is historically related to or motivated by certain semantic properties such that there are specific noun classes only for humans, animals, trees and plants, locations, and objects (Matondo, 2003; Morrison, 2018), as shown in Table 1. For example, class 1/2, in several Bantu languages including Sukuma, characteristically includes humans, class 7/8 includes instrumental objects, and class 9/10 includes animals. The results and discussions section provides details on how noun class prefixes appear on PNs.

3. Research methodology

This study adopted a qualitative approach in collecting, analysing, and interpreting the data. The qualitative approach is suitable for research questions requiring textual data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Williams, 2007), and it is appropriate for “exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:41). Mack et al. (2005) add that qualitative research methods are very beneficial in gathering and analysing cultural-specific data concerning a particular society’s opinions, values, and social settings. The adoption of this approach in the current study is premised on the fact that the data required to address the research questions are characteristically textual; that is, the data collected were inherently textual (PNs). The study was done in the Shinyanga Region, mainly in the Shinyanga Rural District. The PNs involved in this paper are primary school names in the said district. Primary schools were preferred because most of them are named according to the name of the village where each school is located. Thus, the names of primary schools under study are the names of villages in the Shinyanga district. A documentary review method was used to collect the PNs. The method was used because physical or electronic documents are stable records and can be revisited regularly. Moreover, PNs are stable linguistic items as they tend to live longer than the language or culture from which they are drawn; most places permanently retain the same names assigned initially. The author consulted and reviewed Standard Four National Assessment (SFNA) - 2019 Results for Shinyanga Rural District to extract useful data for this study. The results mentioned above are available at https://onlinesys.necta.go.tz/results/2019/sfna/results/distr_ps1705.htm. In 2019, the district had 131 primary schools with students who qualified to sit for the SFNA examination. The choice of primary schools over secondary ones was made deliberately to have a larger sample of PNs for analysis. Secondary schools are fewer than primary schools and are not found in many villages in the district. The reviewing process involved picking up data relating to the phenomenon of interest. Of interest in this study were PNs with origin traces from Sukuma. To obtain PNs with origin traces from Sukuma, all names of primary schools in the Shinyanga Rural District (one of the areas where the Sukuma language is spoken natively) were scrutinised introspectively because the author is a competent native speaker of Sukuma. Only PNs that echoed Sukuma’s originality, 125, were extracted and considered for analysis while discarding the ones that did not. During data analysis, morphological approaches were used. Morphological analyses involved breaking down or decomposing PNs into functional and meaningful morphemes attached to roots or stems to trace their structural patterns and the processes responsible for their formation. PNs were broken down into constituent morphemes to decipher their morphological structures and word-formation processes. The PNs analysed were grouped according to their morphological relationship and presented in tables.

4. Findings and discussions

This section presents and discusses the findings in the context of other studies. PNs are a special category of nouns denoting particular localities on Earth. The structural patterns of PNs in Sukuma and Bantu languages, in general, can be described in at least two ways: first, in terms of the noun class system (a prominent feature of Bantu languages) and second, in terms of the word formation processes involved (cf. Kitwili et al., 2022). These two ways will be shown in sections 4.1 and 4.2, respectively.

4.1. The Structure of Sukuma PNs

The structure of nouns in Sukuma consists of three major constituents: a pre-prefix (PP) (also called augment or initial vowel), a noun class prefix (NCP), and a noun stem (NS). Thus, the general structure of nouns in Sukuma is (PP)+NCP+NS (see Table 1). The findings show that PNs, like other nouns, correspond to the Sukuma noun class system; they reflect the Sukuma noun class system in their morphology (Table 7). Nevertheless, unlike common nouns, most Sukuma PNs usually delete the initial vowel. The structure of Sukuma PNs minimally consists of a noun stem or base, though most Sukuma PNs comprise a noun class prefix and a noun stem (mostly inflected PNs). Other PNs consist of a

noun class prefix (NCP), a noun stem (NS), and a final vowel (FV) (for derived PNs). The other elements of some Sukuma PNs are found in section 3.1.2. Also, the morphological analysis shows that Sukuma PNs fall into two broad categories: those with a structure involving only one lexical item (for example, *Didia*, *Mendo*, *Zofogo*, etc.) and those with a structure involving two lexical items (for example, *Pandagichiza*, *ƒukiliigulu*, *Kigwang’hona*, and many others). This is consistent with Buberwa (2017) and Zeini et al. (2018), who found that PNs in Haya and Sinai comprise one word or a combination of words. Also, morphologically, Sukuma PNs have structures ranging from simple to complex, as explained in section 4.1.1.

4.1.1. PNs with a structure involving only one lexical item

Sukuma PNs with a structure involving only one lexical item reveal different structural patterns. The structural patterns are described as ranging from simple to complex. The simplest of all structural patterns involves only a noun stem or base. The Sukuma PNs, whose structure involves only a noun stem or base, cannot be decomposed into small units or analysed morphologically since they are not attached with affixes. This group of PNs has an NS standing independently without an NCP or FV, as indicated in Table 2.

Table 2: Sukuma PNs Composed of an NS only

S/N.	Noun Stem	Place Name	Gloss
1	Gembe	<i>Gembe</i>	mahogany tree
2	Nyika	<i>Nyika</i>	semi-arid area
3	Solwa	<i>Solwa</i>	be taken
4	Didia	<i>Didia</i>	name of a place
5	ola	<i>Ola</i>	draw lines on a surface
6	kano	<i>Kano</i>	space between ceiling and roof

The Sukuma PNs in Table 2 show that some PNs are simple lexical items such as nouns and verbs. The PNs in this category are formed through zero inflection or derivation. They are directly taken from verbs and common nouns and are used as PNs (for example, *Ola* and *Solwa*). Since they are independent lexical items, they allow no further morphological analysis; they cannot be decomposed into smaller constituent morphemes. The analysis further indicates that some Sukuma PNs are composed of a noun class prefix and a noun stem [NCP+NS]. These PNs also have a structure that involves one lexical item. This group of PNs is mainly formed through prefixation. A noun class prefix is attached to the noun stem to form a place name. The attached noun class prefixes come from different noun classes, as illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3: Sukuma PNs Made up of a Prefix and NS

Class	Prefix	Noun Stem	Place Name	Gloss
3	m- [ŋ-]	mkanga	<i>Ng’wamkanga</i>	at Mkanga’s place/home
5	ɾ-	banza	<i>ɪbanza</i>	people gathered at a meeting
6	ma-	sengwa	<i>Masengwa</i>	bushes to be cleared
9	n- [ɲ-]	ng’ombe	<i>Nyang’ombe</i>	cow like/of cow
12	ka-	doto	<i>Kadoto</i>	a small wetland
14	βo-	nonga	<i>βononga</i>	snail’s shell state-like

Table 3 shows the different prefixes from different noun classes that are attached to noun stems to form PNs in Sukuma. One important observation from the said table is that the noun class prefixes *m-* and *n-* are signified by their allomorphs *ŋ-* and *ɲ-*, respectively. The analysis indicates that the majority of Sukuma PNs (20.8%) involve the attachment of *ng’wa-* [*ŋwa-*] to noun stems, followed by *ɾ-* (16.0%) and *nya-* [*ɲ-*] (11.2%). Sukuma PNs formed by adding *ng’wa-* point to the etymology of such PNs; that is, they inform of a person who is/was regarded a pioneer or first resident in that place. They also point to famous people commemorated for their contributions to society or in a given place that they deserved mention through place naming. First residents or famous people in a place or society become icons or reference points in assigning PNs across cultures – for example, locating places (see Table 4).

Table 4: Sukuma PNs with *ng’wa-* Prefix and NS

S/N.	Prefix	Noun Stem	Place Name	Gloss
1	ng’wa-	mbasha	<i>Ng’wambasha</i>	at Mbasha’s place/home
2	ng’wa-	ng’hosha	<i>Ng’wang’hosha</i>	at Ng’hosha’s place/home
3	ng’wa-	lukwa	<i>Ng’walukwa</i>	at Lukwa’s place/home
4	ng’wa-	kitolyo	<i>Ng’wakitolyo</i>	at Kitolyo’s place/home
5	ng’wa-	madilanha	<i>Ng’wamadilanha</i>	at Madilanha’s place/home
6	ng’wa-	βundala	<i>Ng’waβundala</i>	at βundala’s place/home

PNs in this category are what Buberwa (2016:99) calls “Eponyms”, defining it as the name of a person or group of people from which PNs are derived. Usually, not all names of people are used to refer to places; only the names of great people who contributed to society are worth remembering. So, such names are given as a way of honouring or in memory of famous or great personalities. She provides examples of Swahili eponyms, such as *kwa mangi* ‘at Mangi’s place’ and *kwa mrombo* ‘at Mrombo’s place’.

Another important observation from Table 3 is that the prefix *ɾ-* is canonically an augment but is treated, in this paper, as a noun class prefix. The reason for the said treatment is that it is a crucial component in the structure of many Sukuma PNs. Moreover, it changes non-locative stems into locatives and shows features of other Bantu noun prefixes (Mtavangu,

2019). Like the prefix *ng'wa-*, *ɪ-* is also heavily involved in forming many Sukuma PNs. When *ɪ-* is attached to noun stems, it augments their initial meanings besides functioning as a prefix, as demonstrated in Table 5.

Table 4: Sukuma PNs with *ɪ-* Prefix and NS

S/N.	Prefix	Noun Stem	Place Name	Gloss
1	ɪ-	Sela	<i>ɪsela</i>	a serious shedding
2	ɪ-	Loβashi	<i>ɪloβashi</i>	a dangerous thorny tree
3	ɪ-	Buβu	<i>ɪbuβu</i>	a serious quarrel
4	ɪ-	Pango	<i>ɪpango</i>	a big game board/hole/cave
5	ɪ-	Lola	<i>ɪlola</i>	a bad look/look at oneself
6	ɪ-	Ganza	<i>ɪganza</i>	a big palm or clap
7	ɪ-	Menya	<i>ɪmenya</i>	hard working

As one can infer from Table 5, the prefix *ɪ-* fits more as a class prefix than an augment based on the position it occupies. While an augment precedes a noun class prefix, the prefix *ɪ-* comes immediately before a noun stem or root. Moreover, Mtavangu (2019) argues that the said prefix, morphosyntactically, commands agreement with the verb, contrary to an augment that does not command agreement with verbs. Semantically, the prefix possesses a fixed localising meaning, whereas augments in Bantu languages are devoid of semantic content as they only indicate specificity, topicality and definiteness (Petzell, 2008).

Furthermore, the analysis indicates that some Sukuma PNs are composed of a noun class prefix (NCP), verb root (VR), and a final vowel (FV) [NCP+VR+FV]. These PNs also possess a structure that involves one lexical item. Sukuma PNs in this category are mainly derived from verbs – i.e. they are deverbals. Thus, in this group, PNs are mainly formed through derivation, particularly verb nominalisation. In Bantu languages and Sukuma language, in particular, this kind of PNs is created using nominal derivational suffixes and prefixes that are added to the verb roots. In Sukuma, the vowels [-e, -i, -o, -u] are the most common nominal derivational suffixes, while noun class prefixes form the nominal derivational prefixes. Verb nominalisation is exemplified in Table 6.

Table 6: Sukuma PNs with the Structure: NCP+VR+FV

S/N.	Prefix	Verb Root	Final Vowel	Place Name	Gloss
1	mi-	shep	-o	<i>Mishepo</i>	escaping frequency
2	βu-	sul	-e	<i>βusule</i>	the act of peeping
3	βu-	duh	-e	<i>βuduhe</i>	the state of being blunt
4	ka-	βal	-e	<i>Kaβale</i>	the kind of counting
5	n-	dugut	-i	<i>Nduguti</i>	bad smelling place
6	∅-	hinduk	-i	<i>Hinduki</i>	the turning around
7	∅-	pun	-i	<i>Puni</i>	the state of emerging

Table 6 shows Sukuma PNs derived from different verbs by adding derivational affixes. The PNs shown are derivatives from Sukuma verbs *shepa* ‘escape’, *βala* ‘count’, *duguta* ‘smell/go bad’, *duha* ‘be blunt’, *suula* ‘peep’, *hinduka* ‘turn around’, and *puna* ‘emerge’. Morphologically, when the verb and derived name are compared, it can be noted that prefixation and suffixation processes take place. Therefore, for PNs to be formed from verbs, the verb base form should be modified in initial and final word positions. In the prefixation process, the noun class prefixes *n-*, *ka-*, *βu-*, and *mi-* are added to the verb roots, though some PNs do not have a noun class prefix. The suffixation process is characterised by the addition of nominal derivational suffixes *-i*, *-o*, and *-e*. These vowels replace the final vowel *-a* in the verbs, the canonical final vowel in most Bantu languages. It can be observed that the places bearing the names exemplified were named following certain incidences described by the verbs.

4.1.2. PNs with a structure involving more than one lexical item

Some Sukuma PNs consist of two elements: a noun and an adjective (ADJ). The noun may consist of a noun class prefix and a noun stem. The structure of PNs with the said components is [(NCP)+NS+ADJ]. This structure demonstrates a compounding process, specifically a noun-adjective [N+ADJ] combination pattern, as shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Sukuma PNs with the Structure: [(NCP)+NS+ADJ]

S/N.	Prefix	Stem	Adjective	Place Name	Gloss
1	ng'wa-	mpanga	βule	<i>Ng'wampangaβule</i>	at Mpangaβule's home
2	n-	shishi	nulu	<i>Nshishinulu</i>	bitter tamarind tree
3	ma-	we	milu	<i>Mawemilu</i>	white/glittering stones
4	∅-	tinde	ng'hulu	<i>Tindeng'hulu</i>	old Tinde
5	∅-	pandagi	chiza	<i>Pandagichiza</i>	move (your) feet well

The examples in Table 7 show that Sukuma PNs formed from noun-adjective combinations mostly reflect some attributes of a particular place. This suggests that speakers observe the characteristics of a particular place and use them as benchmarks for assigning a particular name. It could be the pioneering person, objects like stones, plants, or trees. For example, *Ng'wampangaβule* suggests that the place was so named because a man called *Mpangaβule* was the first to reside in that area or was famous in the area. So, people used his name as a reference point; hence, it became a permanent name of that locality. Correspondingly, the morphology of other PNs in Table 7 shows that the attributes [*nulu* ‘bitter’, *milu* ‘white’, and *ng'hulu* ‘old’] of *nshishi* ‘tamarind tree’, *mawe* ‘stones’, and *Tinde* ‘name of a place’ point to the PNs’ etymology.

Apart from the PNs whose morphology involves the noun-adjective [N+ADJ] combination pattern as shown in Table 7, there are other Sukuma PNs whose morphology is composed of a verb and a noun, that is, verb-noun [V+N] combination pattern. This category of PNs is a variant form of compound Sukuma PNs. For PNs in this combination to be well-formed, a noun class prefix or an augment is attached at the initial position of a verb stem (VS), and a noun comes word finally. The structure of PNs in this group is [NCP+VS+N]. In this structure, the noun may also be composed of a class prefix and a stem, as shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Sukuma PNs with the Structure: NCP+VS+N

S/N.	Prefix	Verb	Noun	Place Name	Gloss
1	βu-	kila	igulu	<i>βukilugulu</i>	crossing heaven/sky
2	ɪ-	bada	kuli	<i>ɪbadakuli</i>	lizard catching/seizing
3	ɪ-	kingwa	manoti	<i>ɪkingwamanoti</i>	be obstructed by money notes
4	ɪ-	sela	magazi	<i>ɪselamagazi</i>	shedding-blood/bloodshed
5	ɪ-	shina	βulandi	<i>ɪshinaβulandi</i>	scratching scabies/rashes
6	ki-[ji-]	gwa	ng'hona	<i>Kigwang'hona</i>	a place where eagles land/fall

The examples in Table 8 point to a common phenomenon, compounding. Sukuma PNs are formed through a combination of a verb and a noun, as explained. The prefix *ɪ-* appears very productive in forming PNs through the said combination pattern; 16% of PNs analysed comprise this prefix (see Table 9). It is almost invariably applied in all verbs patterned with nouns to form PNs in the Sukuma language. For example, the verbs *kila* ‘cross/surpass’, *bada* ‘catch/seize’, *kingwa* ‘be obstructed’, *sela* ‘shed’, *shina* ‘scratch/rub’ and *gwa* ‘fall’ are patterned with the nouns *igulu* ‘heaven’, *kuuli* ‘lizard’, *manoti* ‘money notes’, *magazi* ‘blood’, *βulandi* ‘scabies’, and *ng'hona* ‘eagles’, respectively, to form PNs.

4.1.3. Distribution of Sukuma PNs across Noun Classes

Based on the noun class system in Bantu languages, some noun classes exist for locations. In the Sukuma language, the locative noun classes are 16, 17, and 18, with the prefixes *ha-*, *gu*-[ku-], and *mo-*, respectively, as their corresponding class markers (see Table 1). PNs are thus expected to fall under these three noun classes. Nevertheless, Sukuma PNs are distributed across 11 different noun classes (see Table 9). This entails that about 11 noun class prefixes are reflected by the Sukuma PNs. This distribution is because PNs are derived from different entities such as objects, persons, animals, and plants belonging to different noun classes. There is, thus, some variation in the frequency in which different PNs are distributed to different noun class prefixes in Sukuma. This point is clarified by the data provided in Table 9.

Table 9: Distribution of Sukuma PNs across Noun Classes

Noun Class	Prefix	Frequency	Percentage
3	ng'wa- [ŋwa-]	26	20.8
4	mi-	1	0.8
5	ɪ-	20	16.0
6	ma-	9	7.2
7/8	ji- [shi-/ki-]	9	7.2
9/10	n- [n-]	14	11.2
11	lu-	1	0.8
12	ka-	5	4.0
14	βu-	12	9.6
	others	28	22.4
Total		125	100

According to Table 9, the general observation is that the majority, 97 (77.6%), of Sukuma PNs analysed involve a noun class prefix in their structures, and only 28 (22.4%) do not involve a noun class prefix in their structures. This informs that noun class prefixes are a significant component in the structures of most Sukuma PNs. Regarding specific noun class prefixes, 20.8% of Sukuma PNs analysed are found in class 3, followed by 16.0% (class 5) and 11.2% (class 9/10). Other noun classes that are echoed in Sukuma PNs are noun classes 14 (9.6%), 7/8 (7.2%), 6 (7.2%), and 12 (4.0%). Only a few Sukuma PNs mirror noun classes 4 (0.8%) and 11 (0.8%). This distribution implies that PNs are not a single-word category because different categories of PNs are derived from other nouns belonging to different noun classes. It also implies that place naming is a systematic and cognitive act done by humans whose cognitive ability and creativity are not confined when it comes to language manipulation; that is, people creatively and cognitively form PNs from verbs and nouns belonging to different noun classes.

It is worth noting that although Sukuma PNs involve prefixes from 11 noun classes in their formation, they take properties of noun classes 16, 17, and 18 in their corresponding concordial forms. This is the case because PNs refer to and identify specific locations or places and territories on Earth. For instance, despite the fact that the name *Kashishi* ‘small tamarind’ is made up of the prefix *ka-* [class 12] and a noun stem *shishi*, it agrees in number with locative noun class prefixes *ha-*, *ku-*, and *mu-*, giving *a-ha-kashishi* ‘at Kashishi’, *u-ku-kashishi* ‘to Kashishi’ and *u-mu-kashishi* ‘in Kashishi’. More examples are given in Table 10.

Table 10: Sukuma PNs and their Concordial Forms

Class	Pre-prefix	Prefix	Noun	Derived word	Gloss
16	a-	ha-	Gembe βusanda Masunula	<i>ahaGembe</i> <i>ahaβusanda</i> <i>ahaMasunula</i>	at Gembe at βusanda at Masunula

17	o-	gʊ-[ku-]	Gembe βusanda Masunula	<i>ukuGembe</i> <i>ukuβusanda</i> <i>ukuMasunula</i>	to Gembe to βusanda to Masunula
18	o-	mʊ-	Gembe βusanda Masunula	<i>umuGembe</i> <i>umuβusanda</i> <i>umuMasunula</i>	in Gembe in βusanda in Masunula

As can be observed in Table 10, *a-* and *o-* are pre-prefixes or augments corresponding to the locative classes. They are like duplicate vowels of the vowels found on the class prefixes. The locative prefixes in Sukuma function as prepositions to show, among others, direction, place, and location. For example, *ha-* ‘at’ denotes a location, *ku-* ‘to’ denotes a direction, and *mu-* ‘in’ denotes a place when used with PNs in constructions, such as *u-Peter aliho ahagembe* ‘Peter is at Gembe’ or *u-Peter alimo umugembe* ‘Peter is in Gembe’.

Generally, the findings in this paper point out that PNs in Sukuma are formed by different morphemes that are systematically patterned following some rules guiding word formation in the language. Sukuma PNs are, thus, morphologically analysable, as was also reported by Buberwa (2017) in Haya, Mandillah (2022) in Luhya, and Mojapelo (2009) in Sesotho. This is consistent with the LM theory’s main idea that words (PNs included) can be analysed as consisting of smaller, meaning-bearing units called morphemes. The findings in Sukuma and other aforementioned languages refute the claims made by Habwe and Karanja (2007) and Agard (1984) that proper nouns, including PNs, are made up of only one morpheme (roots), so they cannot be analysed morphologically.

4.2. Morphological processes used in forming PNs in Sukuma

Native speakers of Sukuma employ various morphological processes in forming different PNs. It is worth noting that the place naming strategies deployed follow the general word formation trends found in Sukuma, including inflection, derivation, and compounding. The findings in Sukuma corroborate those of Anindo (2016) in Lulogooli. Anindo observed that Lulogooli PNs are mostly derived, inflected, and compounded. This suggests that they are formed mainly through derivation, inflection, and compounding. However, the results in Sukuma and Lulogooli differ from those of Mandillah (2022), who reported that Luhya PNs are primarily formed by prefixation, compounding, and borrowing processes. Similarly, the findings in Sukuma contrast with the results by Mojapelo (2009), who found that Sesotho PNs are a product of three processes: affixation, compounding, and reduplication. These results generally imply that speakers in many languages deploy diverse strategies in forming PNs, and the strategies tend to vary or overlap between languages.

The findings in section 4.1.1 show that Sukuma PNs reveal a range of structures, from simple to complex, that is, it involves simple and complex morphological structures. The simplest morphological structure of PNs involves a noun stem [NS] only. PNs with this morphological structure are mono-lexemic names and cannot be decomposed further into meaningful units (Table 2). PNs made up of simple stems “have one single lexical meaning and no grammatical meaning” (Koopman & Turner, 2019:4). In other simple structures, the strategy used to form PNs involves a noun class prefix and a noun stem [NCP+NS] (Table 3), and a noun class prefix, a verb root, and a final vowel [NCP+VR+FV] (Table 6). The findings indicate that inflection and derivation form PNs that show simple morphological structures. Moreover, complex morphological structures of PNs involve a noun class prefix (optional), a noun stem, and an adjective [(NCP)+NS+ADJ] (Table 7), and a noun class prefix, a verb, and a noun [NCP+V+N] (Table 8). The findings reveal that the strategy used in forming PNs that display complex morphological structures is compounding, particularly noun-adjective and verb-noun combination patterns. The most complex of all PNs analysed is one with a genitive (GEN) marker inserted between the elements of a compound name, that is, [NCP+NS+GEN+NCP+NS]. *ikungulyaβupina* is the only place name involving a genitive (GEN) marker found in the data. Its morphological structure involves a prefix [*ɪ-*], a noun stem [*kungu*], a genitive marker [*-lya-*], a prefix [*βu-*], and a noun stem [*pina*]. *ikungu* means ‘forest’, *lya* means ‘of’, and *βupina* means ‘sorrow’. Thus, *ikungulyaβupina* means ‘a forest where helpless people find refuge/help’.

4.2.1. Inflection

Bantu languages (Sukuma language included) undergo an inflection process - the process of changing the forms of words and, thus, acquiring grammatical changes (Mangula, 2012). The findings have shown that inflection, particularly prefixation, is one of the strategies employed by the Sukuma native speakers in forming PNs. In forming PNs through this strategy, a noun class prefix is attached to the noun stem to form meaningful PNs. PNs in this category show a structure: NCP+NS. These PNs have a structure that involves one lexical item. The noun class prefixes attached to noun stems come from different noun classes, as shown in Table 3. The majority of Sukuma PNs are formed through prefixation whereby the prefixes *ng’wa-*, *ɪ-*, and *βu-* are highly involved. Based on Table 9, the said prefixes account for 46.6% of the PNs analysed in this study. This implies that inflection is very productive and effective in forming many Sukuma PNs. Examples of PNs involving the said prefixes are *Ng’wamakaranga* ‘at Makaranga’s home’, *ihugi* ‘ghost/ancestral spirit’, *igegu* ‘big hanging river bank’, and *βugogo* ‘delicateness’. Other PNs are given in Table 10.

Table 10: Sukuma PNs formed through Prefixation

Prefix <i>ng’wa-</i>	Prefix <i>ɪ-</i>	Prefix <i>βu-</i>
<i>Ng’wa-βagehu</i>	<i>ɪ-dodoma</i>	<i>βu-shoma</i>
<i>Ng’wa-jilugula</i>	<i>ɪ-halo</i>	<i>βu-sanda</i>
<i>Ng’wa-kuhenga</i>	<i>ɪ-konda</i>	<i>βu-yufi</i>
<i>Ng’wa-malulu</i>	<i>ɪ-menya</i>	<i>βu-lambila</i>
<i>Ng’w-aβenda</i>	<i>ɪ-mesela</i>	<i>βu-kene</i>

In Sukuma, the inflection process is more visible in nouns and verbs, major word categories in the language. This observation corroborates Booij's (2007) idea that inflection is the morphological marking of features of a lexeme, resulting in different forms for that lexeme. As shown in Table 10, when the prefixes *ng'wa-*, *βu-*, and *ɪ-* are added to the nouns or verbs, they mark location (locative prefixes) instead of possession and number. The prefix *βu-*, in Sukuma, when added to the noun as a prefix, the meaning of the noun to which it is attached changes to a noun that shows quality or abstractness.

4.2.2. Derivation

Derivation is also involved in forming PNs in Sukuma. It employs morphological rules in forming new lexemes from the base forms of other lexemes. PNs, like other words in a language, may be formed out of words like nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc. The morphological rules, which contrast between languages, attach derivational affixes to the roots or bases of other words. Derivational processes in Bantu languages are classified into four main types, including nominal and adjectival derivation. In nominal derivation, nouns (PNs included) are derived from roots or bases of other nouns or roots and bases of other words of different grammatical categories (see Table 6). Derivation in Sukuma manifests itself in two forms: derivational affixes can be attached to the word and modify the meaning of the word without changing the class of that word or altering both the meaning and the class of the word (see Mangula, 2012). In other words, nominal derivation reveals itself in two forms: class-changing (where nouns are derived from non-nominal roots or bases) and class-maintaining (where nouns are derived from nominal roots or bases) (Kiango, 2000). The findings have shown that many PNs in Sukuma are deverbals; they have been derived from verbs (see Table 6) and are good examples of class-changing derivation.

However, there are few Sukuma PNs which appear as adjectives. This means that some PNs are adjectivals derived from common nouns or verbs. These are formed by attaching a genitive marker *lya-*, class 7 prefix *ji-* [which manifests itself as *ja-/sha-*], and class 9 prefix *n-* [which appears in its allomorphic shape *n-(nya-)*] to common nouns. In Table 11, which presents examples of adjectival PNs in Sukuma, the affixes mentioned are covered under the term 'prefix'. PNs in this category are a product of adjectival derivation.

Table 11: Adjectival PNs in Sukuma

S/N.	Prefix	Noun Stem	Place Name	Gloss
1	lya-	midati βusalu giti	<i>Lyamidati</i> <i>Lyafusalu</i> <i>Lyagiti</i>	of <i>midati</i> (type of a tree) of beads of the dark/night
2	sha-	timba βuluβa	<i>Shatimba</i> <i>Shaβuluβa</i>	that has become heavy of cotton
3	nya-	malogo ng'ombe	<i>Nyamalogo</i> <i>Nyang'ombe</i>	of charms like of cow-like

Inferring from Table 11, when *lya-*, *sha-*, and *nya-* are attached to nouns or verbs, adjectival PNs are derived. It can be observed that when *lya-* is attached to nouns, the nouns become relational adjectives – i.e., adjectives related to the base noun, which is not mentioned. Also, *nya-* derives adjectives of manner when attached to nouns. Moreover, *sha-* derives the verb *timba* 'be heavy' and the noun *βuluβa* 'cotton' to adjectives of quality *shatimba* 'that which has become heavy' and *shaβuluβa* 's/th of cotton'. This implies that some Sukuma PNs are adjectives but assume the roles of nouns as they denote particular geographical locations.

4.2.3. Compounding

Sukuma native speakers also use a compounding strategy in forming PNs. Compound PNs are names with two lexical elements in the stem, usually with one or more prefix(es) (cf. Koopman & Turner, 2019). The findings illustrate that different Sukuma PNs are formed through compounding. It was found that, in forming compound PNs, different elements are combined. The data indicated that two common combination patterns are found in Sukuma: noun-adjective and verb-noun. The noun-adjective combination has the following elements: prefix + noun stem + adjective [(NCP)+NS+ADJ]. Sukuma PNs with this structural pattern include *Mawemilu* 'white stones' and *Nshishinulu* 'bitter tamarind tree' (Table 7). The verb-noun combination has the following elements: prefix + verb stem + prefix + noun stem [NCP+VS+NCP+NS]. Sukuma PNs bearing this morphological structure include *Kigwang'hona* 'where eagles land or fall' and *Iselamagazi* 'bloodshed' (Table 8). It was generally observed during the analysis that compound PNs are not common in Sukuma compared to inflected and derived PNs.

This paper aimed to examine the morphological aspects of Sukuma PNs to uncover their underlying structural patterns and the word-formation processes involved. The paper crucially contributes to knowledge of toponyms by offering insights into the morphology of Sukuma PNs, helping linguists and researchers comprehend the language structure and how PNs in the study area came into existence. Also, it contributes to preserving Sukuma culture and heritage by analysing and documenting PNs, which hold historical and cultural significance. In the same vein, David (2011:215) avers that PNs are "not only linguistic signs; they also represent social and historical values." Möller (2018) adds that through PNs, language contact, social, physical, and cultural exchange ensued between speakers of diverse indigenous languages are revealed. Thus, PNs are "a special part of our cultural heritage in that they tell us something about the place to which they refer and about the name givers" (Helleland, 2012:101); they are sources of linguistic, geographical, historical, and socio-cultural data (Zeini et al., 2018), that necessitate preserving.

This study holds at least two implications: first, it has implications for linguistic research, as it provides insights into the morphology of Sukuma PNs, aiding in the study of Sukuma language (the largest ethnic language spoken in Tanzania) and its evolution. Moreover, the structure of Sukuma PNs points to the structure of the Sukuma language and gives significant clues regarding their semantics. Thus, the knowledge gained from the current study may be extended and applied to examine the morphological aspects (even semantics) of PNs in other languages in Tanzania and beyond. Second, this study's findings contribute to preserving Sukuma cultural heritage by recording and analysing Sukuma PNs. This helps to ensure that these names are not lost or forgotten over time. PNs are storerooms of different data, including geographical, linguistic, historical, and socio-cultural (Zeini et al., 2018); documenting PNs means preserving them as cultural heritage and the massive data entrenched in them [PNs].

Since PNs are a source of linguistic, geographical, historical, and socio-cultural (Zeini et al., 2018) and hold historical and cultural significance, the current study recommends that cultural preservation and public awareness should be encouraged in Sukuma and other indigenous languages. The reason is that PNs can be used to understand not only the structure of a particular language but also the language itself and the socio-cultural fabric of a community. Moreover, this study confined itself to analysing the morphological aspects of Sukuma PNs; a more comprehensive linguistic analysis of PNs in Sukuma or other languages, exploring PNs' morphological, phonological, syntactic, and semantic features is recommended. Also, further research could focus on examining the etymologies of PNs in Sukuma or other languages in Tanzania and elsewhere.

5. Conclusion

The current paper investigated Sukuma PNs from a morphological perspective. This paper brings to light that PNs, similar to other words in a language, have structures that can be analysed morphologically in terms of their different components. This confirms the observation made by Buberwa (2016) that PNs are composed of unique elements that can afford a morphological analysis. This paper establishes that Sukuma PNs have different structural patterns ranging from simple (for example *Gembe*) to complex (for example, *ikungulyaβupina*). Although the structure of Sukuma PNs minimally consists of a noun stem or verb stem, most Sukuma PNs are composed of a prefix and a noun or verb stem. Moreover, Sukuma native speakers use different strategies to form PNs, including inflection, compounding, and derivation. This paper is a crucial contribution to the study of toponyms, particularly on the morphology of toponyms in Sukuma and other languages. The structure of Sukuma PNs not only points to the structure of the Sukuma language but also gives significant clues about their semantics. The PNs' structure is as crucial as the motivational factors for place naming in determining or contributing to the meaning of a given place name.

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