

Sociolinguistic influences on nicknaming political leaders and connotations in media platforms: Reference from former presidents of Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines how sociolinguistic factors such as ethnicity, class, linguistic register, and media format; influence the production, circulation, and interpretation of Tanzanian Presidents' nicknames and their connotations. The qualitative study which informed by Symbolic Interactionism Theory, collected data from three (3) media sources; newspapers, television and YouTube, and analysed thematically. In active giving translation of the data, 30 participants from Mbeya city were interviewed to interpret presidents' nicknames; includes 10 politician experts, 5 elders from the streets, 10 political members, and 5 senior journalist staff. The analysis revealed that Tanzanian presidents' nicknames are generally assigned in two ways; formal and informal, and that factors such as personal behaviours, characters, habit, time, physical appearances and origins or residential areas influence the emergence of nicknames. It was also, found that politically, nicknames mark power and authority, mobilize and influence societies. The study concludes that although nicknames originated from the society itself, their circulations is depending much on media platforms and political affiliation. The researcher recommends that further research is needed to explore nicknames dimension more holistically across cultures and languages.



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1. Introduction

In the sphere of political discourse, personal nicknames represent more than mere familiarity or informality: often they reflect underlying power dynamics, identity constructions, and sociolinguistic choices that shape public perception (Kabaso & Mambwe, 2025). Throughout many political systems, particularly in contexts with strong oral traditions and vibrant media cultures, the names given to leaders are not just their official titles but the colloquial or popular epithets, carry rich connotations (Bezus, 2019). These nicknames capture popular sentiment, signal respect or resistance, and may crystallize narratives about characters, leadership, or ideology. In Tanzania, for example, the role of language in politics is deeply rooted in the country's diverse ethno-linguistic makeup, colonial history, post-independence nation-building, and evolving media environments, these aspects lead to leaders' nicknames formulation (Rwengabo, 2016).

Presidents acquire a variety of nicknames some affectionate, other mocking, many carrying deeper political or cultural meanings (Johnson, 2022). Nicknames often reflect public opinions, historical events, and personal characteristics. They served as shorthand how leaders are perceived during and after time in the office (Rosado, 2024). For example, in American history, presidents have been given

several nicknames which connote different to their presidential titles, such as Abraham Lincoln's lasting title, "Honest Abe" which connotated his integrity and moral characters. Other, like "The Great Communicator" for Ronald Reagan underscore rhetorical skill and charisma. However, not all nicknames are flattering. For example, opponents dubbed Andrew Jackson "King Andrew I" to criticize his use of executive power, and George W. Bush was sometimes mockingly called "Dubya" as a reference to his Texan roots and speech style, also, George Washington was given a nickname "The Father of Our Country", because he created a new government by shaping its institutions, offices and political practices that have continued for more than two centuries (Tsepkova, 2024). Research shows that system of giving nicknames to presidents and other top leaders is an old fashion emerged many centuries ago (Hudacs, 2024). Leaders across the World were given these extra names for various specific reasons; to show respect, intimacy, perceptions, historic context, significance, success, bravery, identities and fighting spirit against evils and threats Garayeva (2016).

In Africa, the present research shows that presidents and traditional leaders were given nicknames just by using factors as other continents (Khetoa & Mokala, 2022). However, cultural and ethnical reasons such as language, ancestry, traditions, religions residential and geographic origin play important role in nicknaming the presidents. It is seemed that almost all leaders who were in the front line during struggling for independence and then became the first presidents of those nations were nicknamed as the *fathers of the nations*. These include Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Joseph Kasavubu of DRC, Samora Machele of Mozambique, Kamuzu Banda of Malawi, Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe and Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya (Van Walraven, 2019). Apart from nicknamed as the father of nation, the former president of South Africa, for example, Nelson Mandela, was given several nicknames which connoted differently in Xhosa culture where he was originated. Each nickname had its specific meaning. For example, Madiba was the name of a Thembu chief who ruled in the Transkei in the 18th century. It is said that personal politeness of Mandela was the main reason behind its emergence (Boehmer, 2023). Also he was called *Tata*; an isiXhosa word which means "father". This is the term of endearment that many South Africans use for Mandela. Another nickname given to Mandela was Khulu, which means the great one, paramount or grand. It is said that Rolihlahla was Mandela's birth name, which is connotatively meant "pulling the branch of a tree", though colloquially in isiXhosa means "troublemaker" (Boehmer, 2023).

Since independence and the union between Tanganyika and Zanzibar in early 1960's, Tanzania has been ruled by six (6) presidents. These are Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere, who officially took the presidential title from 1962 to 1985, Ali Hassan Mwinyi from 1985 to 1995, Benjamin Mkapa from 1995 to 2005, Jakaya Kikwete from 2005 to 2015 and John Pombe Magufuli from 2015 to 2021. Samia Suluhu Hassan is currently the president in office who came into power in 2021 just soon after Magufuli's sudden death on March, 2021 (Mutahaba, 2014). Before taking presidential authority, Samia was firstly the vice president of Magufuli's government. During their powers as the top government leaders, the six presidents given various nicknames which sometimes interpreted differently and representing different political ideologies. Most of these nicknames had been remaining not only after these presidents to come out from the power but also after the deaths for those who have already died.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Nicknames and their connotations serve as market of identity, fostering social connections, reflect individualism and building social relations (Solomon-Etefia & Ideh, 2020). In political arena, can influence public agendas, create solidarity among members, break social distance and applied to win the voters (Dianitami et.al, 2023). However, despite scholarly emphasis on the significance of nicknames and connotations, there is still limited understanding of how these nicknames facilitate social interactions and if they can work properly in politics (Garayeva, 2016; Guyduk & Solomatina, 2019). During the time of leading, Tanzanian presidents were known by various nicknames which connotatively reflect their ideologies and what they face during the time (Bamwenda, 2018). However, connotatively, to some extent, there was no direct and common consensus to individuals as well as mass media about interpretation of those nicknames; that everyone translated according to a personal attitude, feelings, emotion and political direction someone had. Therefore, it is obvious that the knowledge to which nicknames and their connotations were employed by Tanzanian presidents remain unclear to many Tanzanians (Matsevich, 2020). This may hinder

the adoption of effective social relationships between presidents and their citizens in daily interaction hence to lose the real meaning of having these nicknames (Mapunda, 2025). Therefore, it is critical to study the nicknames and their connotations of Tanzanian presidents as depicted on social media so as to minimize, if possible to directly overcome the gap.

Research Questions

1. What are the connotations of Tanzanian presidents' nicknames?
2. How do Tanzanian Presidents' nicknames reflect sociopolitical ideologies?

1.2. Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by symbolic interactionism theory found by (Blumer, 1937, as cited in Lal, 1995). This is one among the fundamental sociological theory founded by George Herbert Mead in early twentieth century which explains how people construct social reality through shared meaning and interpretations (Aksan et al., 2009). In 1980, Blumer developed the theory by introducing three premises; humans act in response to things based on the meanings they hold for them, the meaning of such things is generated from, or emerges from one's social interactions with others, and that these meanings are dealt with and modified by a person's interpretative process when dealing with the items they experience (Blumer, 1980; Snow, 2001).

In relation to this study, the theory offers a lens of identifying and analyzing the nicknames of selected presidents as interpreted by the Tanzanian society. Though Alver and Caglar, (2015) highlight some critiques to the theory, arguing that symbolism is largely deprived of a real social envision, and that it doesn't paint society picture as well as taking into account human emotions while analysing language; the theory remains important in this study as it is still valuable in language studies especially in explaining the source and interpretations of various nicknames especially those given to Tanzanian presidents. The major assumption of the theory is interpretative process; thus, while analysing nicknames, the theory guides interpretations process of nicknames to obtain multiple meanings. Also, symbolic interactionism theory claimed that "humans act in response to things based on the meanings they hold for them, the meaning of such things is generated from, and that these meanings are dealt with and modified by a person's interpretative process", from this assertion the theory seemed to work well since nicknames always are modified by the people and media circulate the nicknames and become permanently to the users.

1.3. Empirical Literature Review

In the process of writing this research, a lot of literatures related to the study were reviewed. Also, the researcher used this opportunity to increase his understanding about the phenomenon. However, much concentration was given to some of the important factors which seemed to be more important to the context of this study. This is for making the research findings more reliable and useful tool for increasing knowledge about the question of nicknames given to Tanzanian presidents and their correct interpretation in Tanzanian society.

1.4. Nicknames, Identity and Connotations

Nicknames are used across the globe to express affection and closeness (Maher, 2021). They use common themes including both, animal and objects names. In contrast, some nicknames are closer to languages or culture (Maher, 2021). In some parts of the world such as Europe, languages offer a variety of nicknames which are often similar to affection. That is why words like darling, sweetheart and love are frequently used (Rababah, et al., 2024). Gustfsson (2018) asserts that context contributes to understanding the meaning of personal nicknames and that nicknames they can be categorised according to four features: source, composition, meaning and perceived reasons. He continues that in Sweden many times nicknames come from Swedish onomasticon. He draws example to the nicknames such as *lina*, *mia* and *pelle*. He adds that nicknames are also given according to sex. For example, Kenneth and Pelle are perceived as male.

While investigating the social pragmatic and emotionally expressive functions of British nicknames, Nikolenko (2023), found that the main reason for nicknames' formation in the English language is the perception of the environment by a person. This means that nicknames reflect the general culture of English society and culture within the individuals. This evidence shows that

nicknames create socio-cultural symbols and cultural universals to indicate people traditions, habits, lifestyles, tastes and ideas. He gives example of a famous boxer Rubin Carter who was given the nickname *Hurricane* to mean strength and powerful man, and Winston Churchill as *the Greatest Briton* to represent his contribution as fighter in the Second World War.

In Asian societies, nicknames to large extent reflect cultural values and traditions although formal settings may utilize courtesy names and affectionate nicknames are common in building personal relationship (Kim et al., 2024). Studies show that in the countries such as China, nicknames are more casual, fun and personal than formal names. It is common in that country to call people by nickname. Han et al. (2021), found that nicknames are used to show relationship between bloody related persons such as parents and their children to express parents' love and concern for the children. He use an example that a baby may be affectionately called (*bǎo bǎo*, meaning "baby") or (*guāi guāi*, meaning "good boy"). He adds that in some cases, nicknames may appear in professional or social circles as a way to easily identify someone. For example, a boss may be nicknamed (*lǎo dà*, meaning "boss").

In Africa, the studies of Matfunjwa (2024) in Eswatini and Mambwe (2024) in Zambia explored nicknames given to the families to show socio-cultural traits of the family and society. It was also ascertained that nicknames are derived from an individual's characters, physical appearances, prominent people's names, remarkable events and short forms or acronym. Taji (2024), explains that Swahili nicknames are mainly metonymical as they are based on certain observable features and attribute of the named person such physical features, behaviour as well as socio-economic activities. In the study, it was further established that morphologically, Kiswahili nicknames display various morphological patterns including single or two-word patterns and phrasal patterns.

2. Research Design

This study employed a descriptive research design, and data were analysed qualitatively because of the nature of information, methods of data collection and data analysis. The design was found ideal in this study as it seemed to simply allow a detailed description of nicknames in relation to the contexts. Prosper and Borra (2024), descriptive qualitative design is the best methodology for exploring socially determined phenomena, as this study of nicknaming is concerned.

2.1. Sampling Procedures and Sample Size

The study employed a purposive sampling technique whereby nicknames of only two former Tanzanian presidents; Julius K. Nyerere and John Pombe Magufuli were analysed. The selection of the two leaders was made on the criterion that to large extent, the two presidents had almost the same political ideology and characters. It can be apparently observed that apart from few differences, the two presidents had almost similar vision especially in building economic independent nation with strong accountability. In this study, purposive sampling was also employed to select research participants based on their experiences in political and social matters. The researcher interviewed thirty participants; 5 senior journalist staff, 5 elders from recognized streets whose ages ranged not less than 60 years, 10 political members, and 10 were experienced political experts.

2.2. Methods of Data Collection

Semi-structured interview was used to collect data from thirty participants. The researcher posed probing questions about collected nicknames given to Nyerere and Magufuli while participants were required to interpret the collected nicknames from newspapers, Television and YouTube. By using recorder and note-taking, the researcher was able to document information provided on presidents' nicknames, their connotations and implications in politics.

2.3. Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed thematically. The analysis process involved reviewing the data to identify the themes. The identified nicknames were then defined followed by presentation of findings interpretation and discussion as suggested in Mezmir (2020) and Stafford and Farshadkhah (2020).

3. Findings

From the collected participants' information, the study viewed various findings related to its objectives. The findings are presented by [Table 1](#) below:

Table 1. Nicknames and their Connotations

PROPER NAME	NICK NAME	LITERAL MEANING	CONNOTATIVE	SOURCES	REASON FOR GIVEN NAME (S)
Julius K. Nyerere	<i>Mtukufu</i>	The honour/Glory	Respected, One with glory	Characters	He is a national independence symbol.
	<i>Mwalimu</i>	Teacher	The one who is the main source of independence and guaranteed National Unity	Characters/Profession	
	<i>Mzee Kifimbo</i>	Mr. Stick-wielding elder	- Nope: A man with authority; a man of actions, a man who embraces tradition A highly respected with power to lead	Behaviors	He was educated man
	<i>Mchongameno</i>	Mr. New teeth shaping		Appearance/Physique	A national final decision maker
	<i>Haambilik i</i>	A stubborn man	Believe his decision represent community over there independence fighter/liberation/ believe in decision	Characters	His common stand
	<i>Mzee wa Msasani</i>	The Msasani street man		behaviour	Where he established his homes
	<i>Mzee wa Butiama</i>	The Butiama man		Behaviours of loving his homes	Resign from power 1984s' Simplicity
	<i>Baba wa Taifa</i>	Father of the nation		characters	
John Pombe Magufuli	<i>JPM</i>	Acronym	Just a rhythmical sense	Real name pun	He did some of the unbelievable decisions in the history of the nation to bring positive change.
	<i>Buldoza</i>	A Kiswahili appropriation of the English term, Bulldozer	Active leader in making difficult decision for the benefits of nation.	Daily Habits or Job	
	<i>Jembe, Chuma</i>	Hoe, iron	Ability to work, decision, power	Daily habit	
	<i>Mzee wa Chato</i>	homes	Love/kind/patriotism	Bahaviours of loving his home	
	<i>Magu</i>	Truncation/clipping	Simplicity	Name simplification	

Source: Field Data, 2025

According to Table 1, both former presidents; Nyerere and Magufuli, were given numerous nicknames which involve both literal and connotative meanings. The names come from different sources which were motivated by different reasons.

3.1. Nicknames Based on Their Characteristics / Behaviours

Findings in this category indicated that personal behaviours are among the common factors in giving the Tanzanian presidents' nicknames. It was observed that in 1960's, Nyerere was nicknamed as *Mtukufu* (the glorious) and *mwalimu* (a teacher) to show respect and to imply correct decisions he always took during his power, though the nickname *Mtukufu* (*the glorious*) was later rejected because of the criticism among the citizens that the God is the glorious one. Others participants stated that "*it was Nyerere himself who rejected the name, he associated the term with the whites' satire against the black Africans*". They explained that at that time, newspapers put the headlines the term *Mtukufu Rais* to mean President Nyerere, such newspapers included Jamuhuri ya Muungano wa Tanzania-Gazeti VOL. LVIII, No. 40 published on 7th October, 1977. It was observed that Nyerere mostly preferred the nickname *mwalimu*, and that even after his resignation from teaching activity in 1955, he frequently insisted to the mass that he was still a teacher. Also, it was observed that according to behaviour, around 1967, Nyerere was nicknamed as *mzee kifimbo* (Mr. stick). It was the time when he declared the Arusha declaration. Though literally the nickname *kifimbo* means a cane stick man, according to participants, connotatively, "*the nickname was associated with the power of authority*". And that though some citizens believed that the stick had a supernatural or magic power, others ignored this notion.

Furthermore, findings show that in the 1980's, Nyerere was nicknamed *Haambiliki* (one with own standing). It was stated that connotatively, this nickname originated from the fact that he always believed in his decisions, ideas and authority he had, regardless others' opinions. For example, in the late 1970's, he decided the country participate in the war against Idi Amin Dada; the former Ugandan President. Some participants explained that "*some of the senior leaders in the government, the ruling party as well as majority of ordinary citizens somehow did not support this idea, fearing that the decision would lead to many internal problems especially starvation in the country*". Surely, though target of overthrowing Amin from power was successfully achieved, a severe historical starvation problem faced the country soon after the war.

3.2. Nicknames Based on Physical Appearance

Also, it was found from findings that some of Tanzanian presidents' nicknames are associated with physical appearances. Findings show that the nickname *mchonga meno* to Nyerere came from this way. While literally the name means the teeth shaping man, connotatively the name was associated with satire due to his appearance. Oppositely, one participant commented that "*the phrase mchonga meno expressed cultural identity, decoration and prestige especially from the lake zonal areas by which Nyerere is originated*". However, some participants revealed that "*the nickname was interpreted negatively as satire to some citizens especially those they opposed his political ideology*"; *Ujamaa* (socialism). In media, the name *mchonga* was published by Mpayukaji Blog <http://mpayukaji.blogspot.com>, on Saturday, 14th October 2017 in the series of narration of 18 years of Nyerere death memorable anniversary.

3.3. Nicknames According to Individual Job Habit and Instrumentalism

Also, findings show that individual's job habit is another factor for nicknaming the Tanzanian presidents. Through this way, Magufuli was nicknamed as a *bulldozer*, *jembe*, *chuma*. Though literally, the names mean the instruments; a heavy car, hoe and iron respectively, findings show that connotatively, the nicknames meant a powerful or a brave leader. It was revealed by many of the participants that the three interrelated terms implied an appreciation of what was applied by Magufuli specifically taking difficult decisions to make difficult productive things to happen in the nation. Various participants mentioned factors such officialising Dodoma as the capital city which was unpracticed strategy since 1973. Others are the construction of various highly valued projects such as SGR and NHPS. In another way, some of the participants added that, "*the nicknames bulldozer, jembe and chuma was related with by his interesting job performance record since he led various ministries in various times; ministry of Construction, ministry of Land, Housing and Human Development, and ministry of Livestock and Fisheries*". Online media especially YouTube publish these names and the

mass received to the side of government. For example, YouTube publish the song of Rayvany; a Bongo Flavour musician called “*Magufuli Jembe*” in 2020. Within a few days, the song got a large number of viewers. Also, the same social media published a song produced Jovith Shawn “*Magufuli jembe upinzani tupa kule*” in 2017. Also, the song was viewed by many people within few days. As well, the nickname bulldozer also got momentum to the same social media. For example, the Official channel of healer Manu PS and healer Kaziya Abraham commonly “*acuhr.com*” channel published a story under the headline “*Magufuli bulldozer-was right fighter in Tanzania*”, similar to BBC on March 17, 2012 posted “*bulldozer Magufuli-results oriented man*”, VOA English news, on March 18, 2021 9.02 Pm “*Magufuli: bulldozer remembered*”.

Furthermore, in this category, findings revealed that due to his job habit, Magufuli was nicknamed as *dikteta*. Literally the term means autocrat, connotatively refers to some leading without practicing democracy or against good governance and rule of law. Participants stated that “*this term was largely used by his political critics or opponents and some of the activists and rarely used publicly*”. Its implication was associated with the actions such as banning operations of opposition, some of the activist programmes especially which were against his ideology, frequent detention of opposition leaders and some activists, exclusion of oppositional candidates from both, regional and local governments election as well general election particularly those of 2019 and 2020 respectively and expulsion some of the public servants who were accused to counterfeit educational qualifications. As well, firing some of the government officials including his nominees for unsatisfied accountability, and violating global principles in the fight against Corona Viruses in 2021. In presenting its information, YouTube created contents on @ICON TV TZ, Jul 17, 2017 which got 372,609 views, www.youtube.com/@ICONTVTZ; under the headlines involved the term “*Dikteta*” reflecting the President Magufuli.

3.4. Nicknames According to Time

It was also found in this study that Nyerere was nicknamed as *baba wa Taifa* (father of nation) as a symbol of high respect. Findings revealed that the nickname implied his contribution towards national independence and developments as he became the first president of the country. Participants openly stated that “*it was Nyerere who established strong foundations which have been the crucial pillars for national good governance and national unity*”, “*peace and harmony, in the country, is the direct best accountability practiced by Nyerere during his time of leading*” said one participant. “*He is the unique icon in the country*”, added another participant. Media especially Azam TV in October 14, 2023 posted “*in memory of 24 years the death of Nyerere-father of our nation*”, formed the headline “*kumbukumbu ya kifo cha Baba wa Taifa, Mwl. Julius Nyerere*”, it got 131,532 views. Until today, different media and social media publish the nickname “*baba wa Taifa*”, and watched and viewed by the public. For example, millardayo APP; <http://www.youtube.com/@millardayoTZA>, SHASAKI TV, www.youtube.com/@SHASAKI-TV, and [tiktok.com/@shasaki.tv](https://www.tiktok.com/@shasaki.tv), such media and others use to publish the nickname “*baba wa Taifa*”.

3.5. Nicknames Resulted from Places of Origin or Residence

The participants described the reasons behind presidents’ nicknames in relation to places of origin living. While Nyerere was nicknamed as *Mzee wa Butiama*, and *mzee wa Msasani*, Magufuli was nicknamed as *Mzee wa Chato*. Findings show that the phrases connoted their patriotism to the places. It is said that the phrases implied their contributions towards the regions’ development. To justify this fact, participants mentioned some of the developmental factors obtained for the deliberate efforts of the two presidents; making the places as their housing areas, building national museum in Msasani area commonly Mwalimu Nyerere Memorial House, developing Chato Airport as well as JPM bridge during the first phase of being in the power. Participants added that “*they were always returned back to the place of origin to see their blood and clan relatives at every long vacation especially at the end of year*”. It was also said that the three nicknames generally reflected social interactions the presidents had, not only to those places but to the country at large.

3.6. Nicknames Formed by Truncation; Acronyms Process

Lastly, the data collected from different media show that Nyerere and Magufuli were given truncated word; clipping and acronyms. It was observed that, through this way, Nyerere was nicknamed as JK and JK Nyerere, while Magufuli shortened as JPM and Magu. Participants asserted

that “the nicknames had nothing about real meaning apart from just a linguistic rhythmical sense to imply simplification of pronunciations”. However, some of participants stated that “short forming the names of the two presidents, justifies much influence many Tanzanian citizens had, towards the presidents”. Newspapers, DAILY NEWS, ISSN.0858-3807 NO. 1910 in December 10, 2016 made headline “JPM bids farewell to Dar residents”, MWANANCHI published the same acronym “JPM; Sitatoa fedha...” ISSN O856-7573 NO. 6665, November 2, 2018. Other magazine such as Tanzania Railways Corporation, <https://www.trc.co.tz> published headline says “Kumbukumbu ya J.K Nyerere Oktoba 14, 2025, had 31,630 followers. They presented various reports involving the three terms of truncated names, whereby a large number of people viewed them.

3.7. Discussion of the Findings

Findings obtained in this research, relate with numerous studies conducted worldwide. The findings of this study that personal characters and behaviours are among the sources of presidents’ nicknames relate with the studies of Al-Saidat *et.al* (2023), Nazarov (2025), Tur (2025), Kwong (2024), who found that person’s behaviour and characters, in China are used for nicknaming persons including leaders. In the process of giving these nicknames and their connotations and how community interpreted nicknames aligns with Interactionism theory, Snow in 2001 refined Blumer’s three premises of interactionism; argued that, humans act in response to things based on the meanings they hold for them, the meaning of such things is generated, or emerges from one’s social interactions with others. Therefore, the really observable behaviours of Nyerere such as his passion to educate citizens, walking with a cane stick, his strong standing and honors, were then generated and interpreted by the media and public, and led to nicknames such as “*mtukufu, mwalimu, haambiliki, mzee kifimbo*”, these nicknames are interpreted as Nyerere’s keys political legacy in Tanzania.

Physical appearance is another factor for nicknaming presidents, for example, Nyerere’s teeth formed the name “*mchonga meno*” (teeth sharpen). The finding aligns with the studies of Matfunjwa (2024), Mambwe (2024) who discovered that individual’s character and physical appearance are among the factors for nicknaming in Eswatini and Zambia respectively. Also, the works of Taji (2024), Dianitami *et al.*, (2023) and Tur (2025). Observed that the two factors are among source of nicknaming persons in Swahili societies. Though Alver and Caglar, (2015) highlight some critiques to the Symbolic interactionism theory, by arguing that the theory is largely deprived of a real social envision; it was found contrary in this study. It was observed that some nicknames were formed by the true or real physical appearance or real person’s morphology. Thus, Nyerere’s teeth was really his physical morphology, that could be seen by eyes and touched by hands, this proof led to nickname “*mchonga meno*”.

As well, Individual Job Habit and Instrumentalism are found in this study as the sources of giving nickname to the president Magufuli, for example, the nickname “*dikteta*” resulted from his job habit, as well “*jembe, chuma and bulldozer*” the same. Findings are similar to what discovered by Nikolenko (2023), he found that in Europe, individuals are given nicknames due to daily social activities or cultural practices, for example, Winston Churchill as “*the Greatest Briton*” represented his contributions as fighter in the Second World War, the way he fought in war it was explained as his general habit, and his accuracy of power represents the instrument or the tool as how it works.

In a similar way, nicknames given to Tanzanian presidents are formed by truncation process, acronyms and clipping. The findings align to the study of Kürschner (2020) who found that nicknames are resulted by morphological and extra-grammatical processes which include acronym formation, for example, in German, Marion Peter (MP), in Dutch, Patricia (Pe), in English, Alex Brown (AB), Helen (H); the bracketed are the nicknames. From his findings, there is a slightly difference between English and Dutch once it comes to a nickname with a single word, but all names with two names, the nicknaming formation is aligned to this study, whereby John Pombe Magufuli (JPM and Magu) and Julius Nyerere (JK), the nicknames were formed through the acronym formation with two letters.

In addition, discovery of this research, nicknames are resulted from places of origin or residence which are directly reflect with those obtained by Shumsky (2016), he found that in United States people perceive and interpret nicknames of place and persons metaphorically. He provided two examples; One, Joe DiMaggio was given a nickname “*clipper*” the type of metaphor in which the characteristics of a person or place are highlighted by comparing that person or place to a different

location; Two, “Dust Bowl” which in America is a tool found in the place of kitchen, is associated with several nicknames including those with person characters, such as a person’s death or disease. Although, the two studies analyse the personal nicknames originated by the places of living or geographical locations, but the two studies differ; the current study specifically focuses on presidents’ nicknames as it was observed that “*mzee wa butiama*, *mzee wa msasani*, *mzee wa chato*” were nicknames for Tanzanian presidents, unlike to Shumsky who dealt with general metaphorical meaning of places and persons nicknames.

Finally, the findings of this research indicate that time of ruling is another base for giving presidents nicknames. For example, Nyerere was nicknamed as “*baba wa taifa*” (father of nation), it reflects different times, his roles during struggling for independence in 1950s, and the Arusha declaration in 1967. The findings reflect with the study of Boehmer (2023) who revealed that in South Africa, Nelson Mandela was given several nicknames including “Madiba”, the name of a Thembu chief who ruled in the Transkei in the time of 18th century. The finding also, aligns to Interactionism theory which argues that the process of an item modification is the linguistic process in which an item receives modification and new interpretation form (Blumer, 1969 as cited in Snow, 2001). Therefore, nickname “Madiba” was modified to Mandela; it reflects the situation during the struggle for independence in South Africa, and has come to symbolize dignity, reconciliation, and his leadership.

3.8. Contribution of the Study

This study contributes to understanding on the political discourse, particularly sociolinguistic strategies behind nicknames and their connotations. Through the lens of Symbolic Interactionism Theory, we have learned the properties employed in naming system, especially Tanzania presidents with time and phases in political needs and negotiation of power. The study also provides methodological insights, contributing to Symbolic Interactionism. Moreover, it adds knowledge to existing studies on presidents’ nicknames by shedding light on the socio linguistic strategies used in names interpretation processes.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, this study has shown that the media play a significant role in spreading presidents’ nicknames. Nicknaming as a process can be both formal (follow linguistic process for word formation), such as all formed by truncation (acronym) and clipping process, and informal (formed unconscious) process, such as job habit, appearance, behaviour or instrument. Apart from political ideologies of nicknames such as symbol for ruling, influence, authority and power, standing, as well as mobilization functions, nicknames can economies languages, they form and add new vocabulary within community and the words become permanently to users. Connotatively, presidents’ nicknames are angled to the line of social class, ethnicity and political affiliation. Also, it has been observed that presidents’ nicknames provide an opportunity to understand contribution of former presidents and mark a political legacy to new generations.

5. Limitation of the Study

Data especially obtained from interview in this study were only collected from the participants who are living in urban areas specifically Mbeya city. This situation may slightly give different directions when collected in remote areas especially to the ordinary citizens. This comes from the fact that demographic factors such as places of living can affect the wholly process of data collection and hence to the findings, towns and remote areas present different perspectives especially when a phenomenon related to the politics is concerned. Also, due to fewer number of participants, sources of nicknames, different time and durations of each Tanzanian president, type of generation and challenges each president had faced, one can conclude that limiting the generalisation of the study’s findings to all the three presidents’ nicknames.

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