

Encoding Environmental Information into Linguistic Forms: A Study of Medicinal Plant Names in Mankon and Moghamo Languages of Cameroon

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Abstract

This paper investigates the world views that underpin the naming of medicinal plants in Mankon and Moghamo, both Bamenda Grassfields languages of Cameroon. It investigates how environmental information is encoded in the linguistic forms used to name medicinal plants in Mankon and Moghamo, two Grassfields Bantu languages spoken in Cameroon. The study focuses on the relationship between plant nomenclature, morphological structure, semantic interpretation and the speakers' knowledge of their natural environment. This ethnographic study, exploits the qualitative data collection method; the ethnobotanical transects walks and focus group discussions. The tools exploited in collecting the data were a tape recorder, video camera, a note book and pen.

The research identified that, the names of medicinal plants in Mankon and Moghamo are either derived from the morphology of the plant, function or medicinal application, natural quality and attributes, potency, origin, color or smell of the plant. The analysis identified six major naming patterns. Out of the 17 medicinal plants collected and analysed, 3 (17.65 %) were named according to morphology or shape, 5 (29.41 %) were named according to function and utility, 3 (17.65%) were named according to natural attributes, 1(5.88%) named according to potency/origin, 2 (11.76%), named according to color or smell and 3(17.65%) were borrowed names. These categorization account for 100 % of the plants documented.

It is attested that, plant names in particular, and other naming practices can never be detached or void of its sociocultural context, whereby images are drawn from the environment. By documenting these plant names, the contribution of this study in language revitalisation can never be underestimated. The study argues that, the medicinal plant lexicon of Mankon and Moghamo constitutes an important repository of environmental knowledge.

Keywords: Encoding; Environmental Information; Linguistic Forms; Plant Names; Grassfields

How to Cite: Sandrine, T., Vincent, T., & Nyindem, S. N. (2026). Encoding Environmental Information into Linguistic Forms: A Study of Medicinal Plant Names in Mankon and Moghamo Languages of Cameroon. *African Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Research*, 9(5), 93–109. <https://doi.org/10.52589/AJSSHR-KLMDDPFC>

INTRODUCTION

This paper seeks to unravel environmental information embedded in the Mankon and Moghamo languages of the North West Region of Cameroon package in names of plants. The study is anchored within the subfield of Linguistics referred to as Onomastics. According to Crystal (1995), Algeo (2000), among others, Onomastics studies names in all its facets. In its humble beginnings, the focus in this subdiscipline was on proper names, their etymology, history and use. But this has evolved into a multi-discipline with wider applications and this liaises Linguistics with other disciplines. This stands to reason because the practice of giving names to people, things and concepts is a ubiquitous human endeavor, and this endeavor straddles all disciplines. Theoretically speaking, Onomastics cuts across all languages, geographical and cultural regions. For practical purposes therefore, dividing up the discipline in to subfields stands to reason: Anthroponymy is a term used for the study of proper names, toponymy for place names and phytonymy studies plant names. There is also Literary Onomastics and Historical onomastics, among others.

Research in Onomastics covers analysing the origin and history of names, categorising them based on their types, examining how names function within languages (this including their structure and meaning) and studying how names are used in society including their socio-cultural and situational significance (Zgusta 1971).

The rationale to give names to individuals, objects, plants or concepts over the years has been to provide these with unique identifier codes for the purpose of facilitating communication, recognition and identification. Onomastics, in general, and phytonymy in particular, as a subject of scientific enquiry has fascinated scholars over the years. This notwithstanding, the universal principles that underpin this ubiquitous practice have remained tantalizingly elusive. This is because the pursuit in the science of names or naming needs to take into consideration global worldviews in the relationship between people and their environment as a *sine quo non* for any authentic formulation of universal principles. It is not one story that constitutes a worldview, but this must be seen to emanate from an accumulation of many sources. However, as Anderson (2007:83) observes, studies on Onomastics have predominantly been from Asian and European languages.

Considering studies from Asia with regard to naming plants, Singh (2022), Hidayati et al.(2022), Guarrera et al. (2005), among others, have established that salient naming information about plants have been about the shape, size, smell, color, habitat of the plants. In other words, the names categorise the plants according to the plants shape, size, smell etc.

Europe on the other hand, has often used, alongside scientific naming procedure, common, localised or folk names that reflect folk perceptions about plants. The scientific naming practice established in the 18th century by the Swedish botanist, Carl Linnaeus, consisted of every plant having a genus name, which comes first, followed by a species epithet. This has been the practice followed across Europe and America with the goal of providing a universal platform for communication and comprehension, as far as the naming protocol is concerned (Linnaeus, 1758).

Meanwhile, the localised or folk names reflect, among other pieces of environmental information, the medicinal uses of the plant, such as in old English wherein we have *wound-wort* (wound root) , which is a plant used for treatment of wounds (Linnaeus, 1758).

Literature garnered on plant names in Africa shows that folk communities identify these on the basis of their morphology, medicinal properties and habitat. With regard to the medicinal properties, the names point at the types of diseases that the plant could be used to treat and as per the morphology, the name reflects plant shape and growth patterns. Other information the names equally package reveal the type of habitat wherein the plant grows. Studies on plant names are carried out against the backdrop of the plants disappearing or vanishing due to climate changes and the observation that the younger generations are not interested in learning the names of plants. Urbanisation which has led to deforestation and a consequent destruction of these plants is an important factor. In more recent times, the issue of language endangerment and language death make such studies on plant names more urgent and relevant. This is where our study on plant names in Mankon and Moghamo languages finds its niche.

According to ALCAM (1983), Mankon is a Grassfields language spoken in Cameroon. It is one among the group of languages known as Ngemba. Mankon shares boundary with the people of Nkwen. According to Ethnologue (2005) it is believed that they migrated from the Widikum tribe and have the same ancestry with the Widikum people. Mankon lies about 1000m above sea level. It is an elevated area of plateau and small hills, which makes up part of Cameroon's Grassfields. Most of the hills in this area are named after its location or a prominent local vegetation or a notable event.

According to Ethnologue (2005), Moghamo is a Grassfields Bantu language spoken by 75000 speakers of Batibo subdivision in Cameroon. It is important to note here that it is both heavily forested as one move from Mamfe through Batibo northwards and more of savannah vegetation as one approach Bali up to Bamenda, the regional headquarters.

METHODOLOGY

Study Approach

The study adopts the qualitative ethnolinguistic study utilizing descriptive frequencies research approach, to investigate plant names, their uses and social functions in the Mankon and Moghamo languages. The qualitative method entails a contextual analysis of plant names. In order to collect first-hand information, we worked with a group of 20 people and four individuals who are native speakers of these languages. The research instruments used for this study included an interview guide, word list and focus group discussions. This was in abid to get a detailed information about the plants.

Methods of Data Collection

Data was collected through free listing whereby the key informants were asked to give the name of each plant, the meaning of the names, their medicinal value if known and function of each of the plants. The ethnobotanical transects walks was also exploited to collect data. Going by this method, in the company of the informant, we had a walk around different gardens, farms and areas with vegetation around the compound and places where these medicinal plants were found. In Mankon, the place where such medicinal plant is grown is called *Nibiti̱ḏ*. Such places are usually considered Sacred like shrines and children are not allowed to play around it, *in case they destroy any of the medicinal plant species*. We collected the names of the plants and any other socio-cultural significance of the meanings in

both Languages. We also presented pictures of some other medicinal plants which may not have been found for the informants to give us their names and functions.

As per the interview guide, we identified those intentionally growing medicinal plants, vegetables, fruits, and discussed with the growers for deeper insights. Furthermore, with regard to the focus group discussions, we visited some tribal meetings which usually hold on Sundays, in other for members of the tribal group to identify the plants we brought along and also for them to give us or direct us to those whom they knew to have medicinal gardens. The essence here was to get information from different sources in order to be sure of the information about the plants. The interviews that involved plant names and their meanings were recorded by using digital voice recorder while the photos of the plants were taken through digital camera. In other places, hand writing of plant names and explanation on note books was done. A total of 18 plants names were collected in both languages and focus was on medicinal plants. 17 of these plants were analysed according to plant descriptions. These plants were described according to their morphology, functions, natural quality and attributes, potency, origin and color or smell.

A thematic analysis of the data was done to generate different themes by following procedures by Braun and Clarke (2006). In identifying the themes, we listened again to the voices recorded and read all the transcripts to gain a holistic understanding of the socio-cultural significance of the meanings of plant names in Mankon and Moghamo.

Ethical Considerations

In relation to ethical considerations, we obtained the informed research consent from the informants for them to participate in the study. They also permitted the use of a voice recorder and for us to take pictures.

FINDINGS

Following the classification established by Mdoe (2025), and Mziray and Lusekelo (2025), among others, we discuss the findings on the naming patterns in Mankon and Moghamo as per the morphology, function, natural quality and attributes, potency, origin, color or smell etc. The name depicts in one form or another, the perception of the Mankon and Moghamo people of their environment.

The analysis of the 17 medicinal plants names reveals systematic relationships between linguistic form and environmental knowledge in Mankon and Moghamo. The names are not arbitrary labels, rather, they frequently encode salient properties of the plants, including their physical shape, medicinal function, natural attributes, color, smell, perceived potency and cultural origin.

Naming by Shape or Morphology of Plant

The names here draw a similitude to some environmentally familiar object such as in table 1, table 2, and table 3. Three of the 17 plants (17.65%) were named primarily on the basis of perceived resemblance between the plant and a familiar object. These include rabbit grass, birds eye, and gotu kola. The names demonstrate how speakers map salient visual properties of plants onto familiar entities in their environment.

In the table which carries information, the first column refers to the language, the second to the plant species name and the gloss. The third gives the translated meaning of plant names in Mankon and Moghamo language, the fourth column are the names in which the plant is commonly referred in the Grassfields community. The last column gives the scientific name.

Table 1

Language	Plant Name	Translation	Common Name	Scientific Name
Moghamo	<i>Atongheh ngap</i> (Ear rabbit)	Rabbit ears	Rabbit grass	<i>Emilia coccinea</i>

In table 1, the name of the medicinal plant in Moghamo, draws a similarity with the ears of a rabbit, referring to the shape of the plant. The form *atongheh ngap*, translated in the original data as ear rabbit illustrates a nominal compound in which, the conceptual domain of the animal (rabbit) is used to identify a salient physical part of the plant namely its ear-like shape. The name therefore involves a process of environmental categorization in which the speaker identifies a plant through comparison with a familiar animal body part.



Figure 1 :A pictorial of rabbit grass/*Emilia Coccinea*

This plant is considered to have many medicinal uses. It is used in this community for the treatment of ear problems and fire burns. This plant is edible and serves as vegetable spice in the traditional dish *ekwang* (a meal prepared from ground cocoyams wrapped in cocoyam leaves and prepared as porridge), and as medicine for stomach disorder, especially running stomach and gastritis.

Table 2

Language	Plant Name	Translation	Common Reference	Scientific Name
Mankon	<i>Imighen-gube</i> (eyes bird)	Bird's eye	Bird's eyes	<i>Spilanthes filicaulis</i>
Moghamo	<i>Aghe-ngup</i> (eye bird)	Bird's eye	Bird's eye	<i>Spilanthes filicaulis</i>

The plant shape in table 2, *spilanthes filicaulis* in the perception of the Mankon and Moghamo people looks like the eyes of a bird. The flowery part of the plant is described as having the shape of a bird's eye. Similarly, *imighen-gube* and *aghe-ngup* encode the conceptual association between an eye and a bird. The repeated segmentic pattern is significant. speakers select a highly anatomical feature 'eye' and associate it with a familiar animal, 'bird' to describe the appearance of the plant. The linguistic form consequently preserves an ecological observation observation about the plant's morphology.



Figure 2 :A pictorial of Bird's eye/*Spilanthes filicaulis*

The flowers of this plant which looks small and yellowish like the eyes of a chicken have medicinal properties and are applied to the treatment of ailments such as toothache, sprains, gastritis and infant palpitation. It is boiled with other herbs for the treatment of anemia.

Language	Plant Name	Translation	Common Reference	Scientific Name
Moghamo	<i>Aba-meg</i> (half-moon)	Half moon	Guto cola	<i>Centella asiatica</i>

In table 3, the shape of the plant is like a crescent(half-moon). A crescent moon is a lunar phase where less than half of the moon's visible surface is illuminated by the sun. This is a familiar site to the observant Moghamo native. Thus, in looking at the plant, it reminds them of the crescent moon and therefore its name aba. The name aba-meg, translated as half-moon represents another type of visual comparison. The plant form is interpreted through resemblance to the crescent or half- moon. In this case, the environmental knowledge encoded in the name derives from the speaker's visual classification of the plant.



Figure 3: A Pictorial of Gotu Kola/*Centella Asiatica*

This plant is known as a plant of longevity, for its potential to support brain health, improve circulation and heal skin. It also possesses anti-inflammatory and anti –oxidant properties, supporting overall health and combating cell damage.

Naming by Function and Utility

Five plants are explicitly identified in the original findings as having names based on function or utility. This constitutes $5/17=29.41\%$, making functional naming the largest category in the dataset.

The medicinal plants under this rubric are not named by their morphology but by the type of ailment they treat. That is from the name, one can already deduce the type of ailment they treat.

Table 4

Language	Plant Name	Translation	Common Reference	Scientific Name
Moghamo	<i>Afuh nemi</i> Medicine blood	Blood medicine	Two side leaf	<i>Eremomastax speciosa</i>
Moghamo	<i>Nchung</i> (Tie)	Tie	Bahama grass	<i>Cynodon dactylon</i>
Mankon	<i>Nedju-ju-ningu</i> (Flu bird)	Bird flu	Miracle leaves	<i>Bryophyllum pinnatum</i>
Moghamo	<i>Uwirre ngnwei</i> Fire God	God's fire	„	„
Moghamo	<i>Njobock</i> (cancer)	Cancer	mistletoe	<i>Viscum album</i>

Five plants were identified in both languages to have been named according to function and utility. As earlier mentioned, the plant names in table 4 give us information on what ailment it's used to treat in the Mankon and Moghamo communities. Looking at the translated meanings on the table; blood medicine, tie, bird flu and god fire, it depicts their world views and perception of their environment. A native of Moghamo attributes meaning based on the function of the plant. when talking about the plant *Eremomastax speciosa* because of its healing properties and treatment of anemia, they give the name *afuh nemi*, meaning blood medicine. The name directly connects the plant with its medicinal function.

A Moghamo native will also attributes meaning to the plant; Bahama grass, based on the way this particular plant is used within the Moghamo community. Within this community, this particular plant is used to tie and that's why they called it *nchung* which means to tie. Another example as seen in table 4 is the plant name *uwirre ngnwei* translated into English as 'God fire', a common ailment that attacks children and adults. So they attribute the name of this particular plant to the treatment of this disease.

Similarly, in the Mankon community, they name plants based on their functions. Looking at table 4, they attribute meaning to the plant commonly called Miracle leaves as *nedju-ju-ningu*, which means 'bird flu'. This particular herb is used to treat bird flu. The name associates the plant with the condition it is used to treat.

The functional naming pattern demonstrates that, plant nomenclature constitutes a form of knowledge classification. Speakers do not merely distinguish one plant from another; they encode information concerning what a plant does and how it is used within a community.



Figure 4: A pictorial of two side leaf/*Eremomastax Speciosa*

This plant is grown to scare away witches and wizards according to the natives. Although, it is mostly used as a medication for patients suffering from anemia, it is also used as protection against spiritual forces.



Figure 5: A pictorial of bahamma grass/*Cynodon dactylon*

In Moghamo, nchung means to tie. The name came about from native doctors who after preparing a concoction, will tie the grass, believing to protect from other evil people. This plant is said to have spiritual functions.

Language	Plant Name	Translation	Common Reference	Scientific Name
Mankon	<i>Kri-kri-kupti</i> (Hen cover) <i>Bobo</i> (chicks)	Hen cover your chicks	Touch me not Sleeping leaf	<i>Mimosa pudica</i>

This plant is used as a treatment for young babies who experience difficulties in walking as a result of biological malformation or handicap from birth. It is a good cleanser, when mixed with other herbs to pump children with stomach disorders.



Figure 6: A pictorial of Miracle leaf/*Bryophyllum pinnatum*

This plant is mostly for medicinal purposes among the Mankon and Moghamo people in the treatment of ear problems, cough, bird flu, gastritis and high blood pressure.

Naming By Natural Attributes

Three plants fall in to this category, representing 17.65% of the data set. The names draw attention to physical or observable properties of the plants. The medicinal plant under this rubric are named according to their natural attributes.

Table 5

Language	Plant Name	Translation	Common Reference	Scientific Name
Moghamo	Inoh (watery/thick)	Watery and thick nature	Miracle leaves	<i>Byrophyllum pinnatum</i> .

The plant in table 5 has been named or described according to its watery nature. This plant is mostly for medicinal purposes and it is used for the treatment of cough, gastritis and ear problems.



A pictorial of Miracle leaf/*Bryophyllum pinnatum*



A pictorial of touch me not or sleeping leaf /*Mimosa pudica*.

The “sleeping leaf” is used as a cleansing agent and in the treatment of scabies. The plant is actually used as a treatment for willow. Information from local sources shows that this particular plant is scarce as compared to the past. This means is gradually getting extinct.

Table 8

Language	Plant Name	Translation	Common Reference	Scientific Name
Mankon	Achakasara	Wild nature of the plant	Benjamin plant or the devil's weed	Chromolaena adorata

The name *achakasara* depicts the wild nature of the plant. That is the plant that grows widely. the perception of the Mankon people about this plant is that the plant grows and spreads widely therefore having the name achakassara which signifies the way the plant grows widely.



Figure 7: A pictorial of achakassara/Chromolaena adorata

This plant is widely use in traditional medicine as an antibacterial and for quick wound healing. It is boiled with other herbs as a remedy for typhoid.

The data include inoh, associated with the plants watery/thick nature, mimosa pudica, associated with its characteristic ‘sleeping’ or closing behavior, and achakasara, whose name is explained in the manuscripts as referring to the plants tendency to grow and spread widely.

These names demonstrates that environmental perception is lexicalized through salient attributes. The naming process therefore converts observable ecological properties in to linguistic categories.

Naming By Potency or Origin

One plant king grass, (*Ageratum conyzoides*), represents this category, giving $1/17=5.88\%$.

The medicinal plant under this rubric is named according to potency and by origin. In both languages the medicinal plant “king grass” is named by origin and potency, meaning the plant stands tall in both communities with many medicinal benefits.

Table 9

Language	Plant Name	Translation	Common Name	Scientific Name
Mankon	tseh mambo	Named after some one	King grass	<i>Ageratum conyzoides</i>
Moghamo	Ifuh nguemi	Solution to lucost	King grass	<i>Ageratum conyzoides</i>

The name of the medicinal plant is attributed to potency due to its different outstanding medicinal value. In the Moghamo language, the people attribute it to solution to locust. This particular plant is not eaten by many insects and animals. In a time when locust invaded the Moghamo community, the natives observed that this insect did not eat the plant, hence deriving its name ‘ *ifuh nguemi*’ (solution to locust). The study records both the Mankon form tseh mambo and the Moghamo form Ifuh nguemi. The latter is interpreted as solution to locust and is connected with the community’s observation that locusts did not feed on the plant.



Figure 8: A pictorial of king grass/*Ageratum conyzoides*.

Ageratum conyzoides serves medicinal purposes like the treatment of stomach problems, headaches, poison, fever, rashes and fresh wounds. This plant is also said to have spiritual functions.

Naming By Smell or Color

Two plants belong to this category, representing 11.76% of the dataset. The naming pattern here is by the smell or color of the plant.

Table 10

Language	Plant Name	Translation	Common Name	Scientific Name
Moghamo	<i>Anyo nyam</i> Smell animal	Animal smell	Meat herb	Unknown
Mankon	<i>Ndim mbagneh</i> (Back red)	Red back	Two sided leaf	<i>Eremomastax</i> <i>Speciosa</i>

The perception of the Mankon and Moghamo natives with regards to these plants; meat herb and two-sided leaf depict naming by smell and color respectively. The name *anyo nyam* is an attribution to smell of the plant which derives its name. *Ndim bangneh* is attributed to the color of the plant which describes the plant as having a red back. As discussed in section table 4, regarding its function, the Mankon name for this plant (*Ndim mbagneh*) is also classified by its physical color.

The names therefore demonstrates that sensory perception is an important source of lexical categorization. Smell and colour become linguistic cues through which speakers identify and distinguish medicinal plants.



Figure 9: A pictorial of two-sided leaf/*Eremomastax Speciosa*

This plant is grown to scare away witches and wizards according to the natives. Although, it is mostly used as a medication for patients suffering from anemia, it is also used as protection against spiritual forces.

Plant With Borrowed Names

Three plants are classified as having borrowed names, representing 17.65% of the dataset. These are plants that are not indigenous to the Grassfields but are widely used in the Grassfields. These includes; fever grass/fiba grass, coconut and *massopo*/scent leaf.

Table 11

Language	Plant Name	Translation	Common Reference	Scientific Name
Mankon	Fiba grass	Fever grass	Fiver grass/lemon grass	<i>Cymbopogon citratus</i>
Moghamo	Coconut		Coconut	<i>Cocos nucifera</i>
Mankon	Massopo		Scent leaf	<i>Ocimum gratissimum</i>

Plants names in Mankon and Moghamo are also borrowed from other languages. Borrowings demonstrate that, the plant lexicon is not closed. Contact between languages and communities contributes to the expansion of the lexical inventory used for plants particularly where plants or their names enter the community through contact with other linguistic groups.

Quantitative Summary

The correct distribution of the 17 plants is as follows:

Naming Category	Number of Plants	Correct Percentage
Morphology/shape	3	17.65%
Function/utility	5	29.41%
Natural attributes	3	17.65%
Potency/origin	1	5.88%
Colour/smell	2	11.76%
Borrowed names	3	17.65%
Total	17	100.00%

DISCUSSION

This paper set out to unravel environmental information encoded in linguistic forms about medicinal plants names in Mankon and Moghamo languages. Here, we are referring to how the Mankon and Moghamo people conceive, express and transmit information through the medicinal plants they have used over the centuries. The findings demonstrate that, medicinal plant names constitute more than a set of arbitrary lexical labels. They provide evidence of how speakers perceive, categorise and linguistically present salient properties of their environment. This study is carried out against the backdrop of climate change and urbanization which has been responsible for the disappearance of some these plants.

One also wants to bring in to lime light the issue of language endangerment and language death, whereby the names of some of these plants also disappears. With the disappearance of these plants, just as the disappearance of some of the names of these plants, has been established as an unfortunate incident for humanity. This is because of the potential of these plants or names of plants for the survival of humanity. These plants as has been established in the paper, could be exploited for the healing of various ailments. In Mankon and Moghamo, names are given to plants as per their morphology, function, natural quality and attributes, potency, origin and color or smell.

It would be important to note that, the same plant could carry different names in Mankon or Moghamo. This is where the people's world view come in to play.

The results indicate that, 29.41% (5/17) of the plant names are based on function or utility, making this the most productive naming strategy in the data set. Morphological resemblance, natural attributes and borrowed forms each account for 17.65% (3/17), while colour or smell accounts for the complete dataset of 17 plants or 100%. The predominance of functional naming, suggests that medicinal value is particularly salient in the conceptualisation of plants in the two communities. Names such as afuh nemi, interprets as blood medicine and nedju-juning, associated with 'bird flu', linguistically foreground the relationship between a plant and its perceived therapeutic function. The plant name consequently provides information about the community's practical knowledge of the environment.

Morphological knowledge constitutes the second major pattern when individual categories are considered alongside natural attributes and borrowing. Names such as atongheh ngap (rabbit ears) and the form associated with 'birds' eye' demonstrates how speakers use familiar entities in their environment as comparison points for classifying unfamiliar or visually distinctive plants. This process can be understood as a form of semantic mapping in which plant morphology is interpreted through culturally familiar environmental objects.

The names based on natural attributes provide further evidence that environmental observation is incorporated into lexical meaning. The naming of plants through properties such as watery/ thick texture, growth behavior or characteristic movement, shows that speakers select particular perceptual features as diagnostic of plant identity. These features become conventionalized linguistic signs through repeated community use.

The color and smell category, similarly demonstrates the rule of sensory perception in plant classification. Anyo nyam 'animal smell' and ndim mbagneh 'red back' show that olfactory and visual properties can serve as linguistic identifiers. such names encode ecological information because the linguistic form directs attention to properties that speakers consider sufficiently distinctive to identify a plant.

Borrowing provides another dimension of the relationship between language and the environment. The presence of borrowed plant names demonstrates that, the Mankon and Moghamo lexicon have developed through linguistic contact. Plant nomenclature is therefore dynamic. It reflects not only local ecological knowledge but also historical and contemporary interactions among neighboring linguistic communities. Considering that Mankon is just one out of the Ngemba language and Moghamo is just one out of Meta language, one can safely conclude that the system of naming is more inclined to naming by function and morphology.

The results also have implications for language documentation and environmental knowledge. The study notes that, climate change, urbanization, and the disappearance of some plants threaten both the plants themselves and the linguistic knowledge associated with them. If the plant disappears from every day use, the specialized lexical item associated with it, may also become endangered. Documenting the lexical and morphological structure of medicinal plant names, therefore contributes simultaneously to linguistic documentation and the preservation of indigenous environmental knowledge.

Overall, the findings support the argument that the Moghamo and Mankon medicinal plant lexicon represents a structured system of environmental categorization. The names encode information about appearance, function, sensory properties, perceived potency, cultural experience and language contact. The linguistic forms therefore provide a window into how speakers organize and transmit knowledge about the natural environment.

CONCLUSION

This article presents clear information about plant names in Mankon and Moghamo languages. The plant nomenclature in these languages convey meaningful information which is very significant in our society today. We have established that, Mankon and Ngemba exploit names by morphology, function, natural attributes, potency, color or smell and borrowed names from other languages. We have also documented the names that even if they were to be extinct, they have been documented and could be reconstructed.

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