

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

Euphemism as an indirection strategy in communication among the Dagaaba

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MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

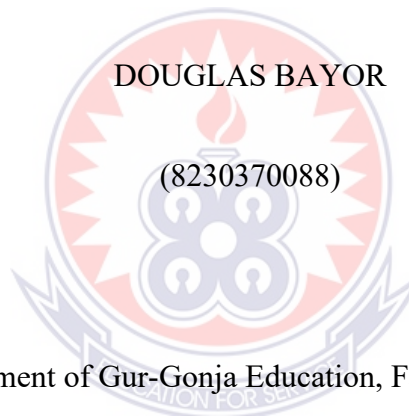
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EUPHEMISM AS AN INDIRECTION STRATEGY IN COMMUNICATION AMONG
THE DAGAABA

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A Thesis in the Department of Gur-Gonja Education, Faculty of Ghanaian Languages
Education, submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, University of Education, Winneba,
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Master of Philosophy

Degree in Ghanaian Language Studies (Dagaare).

DECEMBER, 2024

DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, DOUGLAS BAYOR, hereby declare that this thesis, except for quotations and references contained in published works that are identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my original work and that to the best of my knowledge, it has not been accepted either in part or whole, for the award of any other degree elsewhere.

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

SUPERVISORS DECLARATION

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this thesis was supervised by us in accordance with the guidelines for the supervision of thesis as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

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DATE:

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my late father, Julius Bayor, A.K.A Nagbarefore, my lovely mother, Clothilda Bayor, and my entire family who are solidly behind me in everything.



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I am grateful to God Almighty for His direction and protection during my academic journey. God gave me the strength and health to pursue this education, and I am thankful. I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to many people and groups who helped me fulfill my dream. Without them, things would have been more difficult for me.

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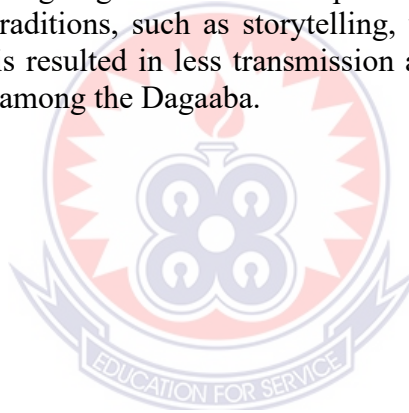
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ABSTRACT

This study examines euphemism as an indirection strategy in communication among the Dagaaba. The study adopts a qualitative approach, incorporating ethnographic methods, observation, interviews, and discourse analysis to examine the meaning of euphemistic expressions in conversation in some identified themes and contexts such as; the theme of death, the theme of sexual intercourse, and sex organs, the theme of menstruation, the theme of pregnancy and the theme of alcoholism/drunken. It explores the functions of euphemistic expressions in conversation among the Dagaaba. The study also investigates the influence of modernization on euphemisms in communication among the Dagaaba. The data used for this study were mainly gathered from primary sources. The study employed Brown and Levinson's 1987, politeness theory in its data analysis. The analysis of the data revealed that the Dagaaba use euphemistic expressions in their everyday interactions under various themes and circumstances. Also, the study found out that the Dagaaba does not only use these euphemistic expressions as taboo avoidance, and politeness strategy but also to disguise reality, develop intellect, reinforce cultural values, exclude participants in a conversation, and to be humorous. The study further revealed that modernization has positively enabled the younger generation to adapt new euphemistic expressions, and negatively declined oral traditions, such as storytelling, where the Dagaaba euphemisms are orally transmitted. This resulted in less transmission and usage of euphemisms within families and communities among the Dagaaba.



CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE THESIS

1.0 Introduction

This thesis investigates euphemism as an indirection strategy in communication among the Dagaaba. Euphemism, as a literal and linguistic device, stands out as a pivotal strategy of indirection, allowing speakers to navigate challenging conversational terrains by substituting potentially offensive or uncomfortable expressions with milder, more acceptable ones. Among the Dagaaba, euphemism plays a crucial role in interpersonal and communal communication as it reflects their worldview, values, and social norms. It is tied to notions of respect, modesty and avoidance of conflict. The researcher focuses on euphemism as an indirection strategy unlike other indirection strategies such as, proverb, evasion, sarcasm, or circumlocution because euphemism directly addresses the need to mitigate potential discomfort in communication. Furthermore, the prevalence of euphemistic expressions in Dagaaba speech highlights its role as a cultural communicative marker, providing insight into how the community navigates delicate social issues.

The study explores the various themes and contexts in which euphemisms can be used and the different extensions those euphemistic expressions can take within a particular context or setting among the Dagaaba. Again, the study also explores the functions of euphemisms in Dagaare. It further examines the influence of modernization on the Dagaaba use of euphemisms in their daily interactions.

1.1 Background to the study

Through language in our daily lives, people can communicate with one another to instruct, convince, reassure, or inform them. Thus, according to Pridham (2001, p.2), a conversation, is any interactive spoken exchange between two or more people and can be:

- Face-to-face exchanges – these can be private conversations, such as talk at home between the family, or more public and ritualized conversations such as classroom talk or Question Time in the Houses of Parliament;
- Non-face-to-face exchanges, such as telephone conversations;
- Broadcast materials such as a live radio phone-in or a television chat show.

In verbal communication, there are two or more participants in different social contexts, thus, a speaker and a hearer. For effective communication, the speaker strives to transmit specific meanings to the hearer/listener through utterances. At the same time, the hearer also tries to understand the speaker's intended meanings from his/her utterances. All kinds of utterances are therefore made by speakers to communicate with listeners. These utterances may be made directly or indirectly in some cases. The Dagaaba like other African languages always resorts to strategies of indirection like proverbs, euphemisms, idioms, sarcasm, evasions, and circumlocutions to express their feelings, views, and ideas to save the face of listeners/hearers and the interlocutor in their social conversations.

Euphemism is one of the common strategies of indirection in conversation among the Dagaaba, used to avoid taboo, vulgar, profane, and unpleasant expressions to adhere to the cultural norms and traditions of the society. The ability to navigate these cultural norms

and traditions makes the Dagaaba more polite in their conversations and also shows the cultural competence of the Dagaaba in society.

The study of euphemisms has gained much importance to many scholars around the globe across languages. Speakers of all languages try to evade the taboo expressions, which is one of the reasons behind the adoption of euphemisms and it has been a topic of importance that entices the attention of many researchers (Jdetawy, 2019). The Dagaaba always resorts to euphemisms as a strategy of indirection in conversation to maintain good impressions.

Hughes (2006) posits that the use of consciously indirect, conventionally imprecise, or socially 'comfortable' ways of referring to taboo, embarrassing, or unpleasant topics is term euphemism. Similarly, Lutz (2000) asserts that euphemism is an inoffensive or positive word or phrase designed to avoid a harsh, unpleasant, or distasteful reality. Meanwhile, Brain (1979) characterizes euphemisms as a verbal instrument of overcompensation that involves “a reluctance to face reality.” Euphemisms are seen to be ‘deliberate’, that is there is always the desire to shape the listener’s interpretation of what is stated. They are also substitutes in the sense that, they stand in to explain taboo expressions.

The characteristics of euphemisms used in the English mass media discourse for diseases, death, and dying were examined by Baranova and Plenteko (2018). A few characteristics discovered throughout their investigation suggested that euphemism is a linguistic phenomenon, a clear example of reciprocal interaction between the ideological principles of the society and its processes of growth.

Shehab, Qadan, and Hussein (2014) examine the role context plays in determining the translation strategies used by translators of Arabic euphemisms into English. The study however revealed that when certain situations/contexts call for the use of different euphemisms in two distinct cultures such as Arabic and English, we expect to find their equivalents in both languages, despite the peculiarities of each language. The best translation strategy in this case is to communicatively convey the intended meaning of the original euphemistic expression while at the same time keeping its euphemistic thrust.

Mocanu (2017) also examined the taboo and euphemisms in religious language. She claims that the foundation of religious language is the understanding of the word's holiness, which is determined by referring to the religious aspect of the human condition. Her study primarily looks at the religious taboos that are unique to religious language and describes the pragmatic valences that euphemistic expressions in religious communication display.

Al-khawaldeh (2014) provided an overview of euphemisms used by Jordanian speakers of Arabic and British speakers of English at Taibahu University. Al-khawaldeh study was to indicate how they used euphemisms in four main topics; (death, lying, bodily functions, and diseases). Al-khawaldeh (2014) maintained that there was no relation between euphemism and gender and that gender did not affect the use of euphemism. The study however revealed that British speakers of English have less euphemistic ways to violate taboo topics than Jordanians. The study concluded that, euphemism as a language was affected by both culture and religion.

Obeng (1997) explored indirectness in pronominal usage in Akan discourse. His study discusses indirect communication among the Akan an ethnic group in Ghana, focusing on

the use of pronominal forms. It highlights how euphemisms and indirect speech help in managing politeness and mitigating face-threatening acts.

Agyekum (2002) looks at the communicative role of Akan. Although his study focused on silence, it delves into the broader spectrum of indirect communication in Akan, including the use of euphemisms. It outlines how indirectness is crucial in social contexts, particularly in the maintenance of face and the avoidance of confrontations.

The Dagaaba like any other African society also resorts to euphemisms in their everyday interactions. With this, the study therefore examines the Dagaaba euphemisms as a strategy of indirection in communication.

1.2 Background of the language

Dagaare is the predominant language in the northwestern part of Ghana- Upper West Region. The language is Dagaare and the people who speak it are the Dagaaba (plural) and Dagao (singular). Waale and Birifor are other speech forms closely linked to Dagaare. In this region of the country (Upper West), the Dagaare, Waale, and Birifor linguistic continuum is occasionally combined into a single language.

Different writers have expressed differing opinions about the Dagaaba migration to their current geographical jurisdiction. Some authors, such as Herbert (1976) and Tuurey (1982), believe that the Dagaaba forefathers were a split-off tribe from the Mossi, Dagomba, or both, who relocated to their present location. Stories, however, claimed that the Dagaaba had relocated from the Dagbon during the rule of Naa Nyagse, who was supposedly the grandson of Naa Gbewaa (1476–1492). The Mabia-speaking natives, according to

Nanbigne (2001, 2008), had no choice but to either go and seek political and economic independence elsewhere or stay and submit to the rule of the military-organized princes.

Bodomo (1994), asserts that several ethnic groups, including the Dagaaba, Mossi, Dagomba, Kusasi, Frafra, Mamprusi, and many others, should be referred to as the "Mabia" because they all descended from a similar ethnolinguistic group. This suggests that these groups had a common ancestor.

Bodomo, (1997), posits that the Sisaala language forms the group's eastern boundary, while Gonja, Vagla, and Safaliba form its southern border. This dialect continuum reaches Burkina Faso to the west and north, where speakers of this linguistic group live, as well as the Black Volta and the international border.

In Ghana, the Dagaaba primarily covers the following towns: Wa, Lawra, Jirapa, Nandom, Hamile, Nadawli, Kaleo, Daffiama, Ullo and Tuna. However, it must be understood that Dagaare is not confined to its ancestral homeland as previously stated. Among other factors, the significant degree of social and geographic mobility of those who speak Dagaare as their native tongue has contributed to the language's expansion throughout much of Ghana. Significant Dagaare-speaking populations can now be found in Accra, Kumasi, Bolgatanga, Tamale, and the majority of Ghana's main cities and villages. Dagaare belongs to the Gur branch of the Niger-Congo language family, specifically the Oti-Volta group (Swadesh 1996, Naden 1989, Bendor-Samuel 1971).

Since the arrival of missionaries during the colonial era, Dagaare has served as the primary language of evangelization in northwest Ghana (Upper West Region). Universities around

the nation, including the University College of Winneba and the University of Ghana in Accra, offer degree programs in Dagaare.

As with most ethnic groups in Ghana, the Dagaaba accepted both the chieftaincy institution and central government for the customary management of their villages as early as the country's independence (Doggu, 2015). Resources, authority, status, rights, and obligations between men and women are distributed among the Dagaaba according to several characteristics, including paternity, descent, succession and inheritance, and economic potential. A person's wealth and the quantity of their possessions determine their popularity and power in society.

1.3 The Language (Dagaare) and its speakers

Dagaare is a Maba language spoken in the northwestern part of Ghana. The speakers are called Dagaaba (plural) and Dagao (singular) and the land is called—Dagao/Dagawee/Dagapaalon. Dagaare has four (4) main dialects. But speakers of all the Dagaare dialects can understand one another despite a few minor difficulties (Rattray, 1969).

Bodomo, (1997) classified the Dagaaba into these categories; Northern, Western, Central and Southern Dagaaba. The Northern Dagaaba includes Nandom, Lawra, Hamile, Fielmuo and their surrounding settlements; The Western Dagaaba includes the Birifor (Lobi), along the Black Volta. It is also spoken by the Tuna community and very similar to that of the Northern dialect. The Central Dagaaba is made up of Jirapa, Nadowli, Ullo, Tizza, Sigri, and their environs. It is known as Central Dagaare because it is widely spoken in the Upper

West Region's middle belt and is fairly understandable to speakers of other dialects (Doggu, 2015). Radio programs, literary works, and Catholic Church publications all use Central Dagaare because it is easily understood by speakers of various dialects. The Southern Dagaaba includes Kaleo and Wa and their surrounding settlements. In marketplaces and other economic hubs, Southern Dagaare, also known as Waale, is the language of commerce. This categorization comes as a result of the different dialects existing among the Dagaare speakers.

The people who speak Dagaare are primarily farmers in terms of economy. Almost every household engages in some form of subsistence farming. The principal crops are millet, corn, guinea corn, beans, and Bambara beans. They also rear goats, sheep, chickens, guinea fowl, and cattle. The Dagao economy depends so heavily on farming that an increasing number of people are moving south in quest of greener lands. It is very common for young Dagaaba to relocate to the south during the dry season to cultivate for money. However, current patterns indicate a shift away from a largely agricultural focus and toward other sectors of the economy. Teenagers with or without formal education who travel to the south for employment have two options: they can choose to work in the mining sector (galamsey), so they move to gold mining towns like Prestea, Obuasi and Tarkwa, or they can go to major industrial cities like Accra, Tamale and Kumasi to work as labourers, watchmen, or in other low-paying occupations in factories and other business enterprises.

Bodomo, (1997), postulates that the majority of the languages that are closely related to Dagaare, such as Moore, Gurenne (Frafra), Kusaal, and Dagbani, are found in the Upper-East and Northern Regions; hence, its near geographic neighbors are not its immediate genetic relatives.

1.4 Statement of the problem

Some of the language's greatest experts have done amazing work compiling the Dagaare literature into books. A few of these esteemed experts are Bodomo (1994, 1997), Kyiileyang (2008), Saanchi (1992), who explored the Dagaaba dirges, Sanartey (2012), also investigate the aesthetics of Kɔntɔmbɔɔr, Dorzie (2012), delves into the Dagaaba pronominal system, Nobaboma (2020), appreciates Dagaaba play songs, and Tangkpaa (2019), also investigated the concept of totemism in relation to conservation of certain species of animals in the Jirapa municipality.

Even though the language has been extensively studied, most of it has been concentrated on the literature, grammar, and anthropological viewpoint. It is necessary to improve on the sociocultural and pragmatic components since it is falling behind, even though there are few things about the people's cultures that are mentioned above.

The notion of euphemism as a strategy of indirection is a fundamental component of all language systems. When it comes to communication between two or more people, it is really important. Euphemism, a key figure of speech in languages, tries to replace offensive or harsh terms with inoffensive alternatives. The subject has received significant attention from many perspectives across languages. Mofarrej and Al-Haq (2015) did a sociolinguistic investigation on death euphemistic expression in Jordanian Arabic. Their study focused on the effect of social factors: age, gender, and religion on the use of these death euphemistic expressions. However, with some observations, it was noted that these social factors do not have much impact on the use of these expressions as it is usually claimed.

Kogri (2014) analyzed the thematic and aesthetic pattern of proverbs in Dagaare. In his study, euphemisms were identified as literary devices embedded in the proverbs. Although euphemism is common in many cultures across the globe, to the best of my knowledge, no research has been conducted on the sociocultural and pragmatics of euphemisms as an indirection strategy in communication among the Dagaaba. As a result, misunderstandings or misinterpretations in communication exist, both within the Dagaaba community and the outsiders leading to loss of cultural knowledge. It is in this regard that the researcher seeks to examine “euphemisms as an indirection strategy in communication among the Dagaaba”, to analyze the meanings of euphemistic expressions in the identified themes and contexts in Dagaare, and explore the functions of Dagaaba euphemisms. To further investigate the influence of modernization on the use of Dagaaba euphemisms.

1.5 Research objectives

The study seeks to achieve the following objectives;

1. To examine the meaning of euphemistic expressions in themes and contexts in Dagaare.
2. To explore the functions of euphemisms as a strategy of indirection in Dagaare.
3. To investigate the influence of modernization on the use of euphemisms among the Dagaaba.

1.6 Research questions

This study answers the following questions;

1. What are the meaning of euphemisms in themes and contexts in Dagaare?
2. What are the functions of euphemisms as a strategy of indirection in Dagaare?
3. How does modernization influence the use of euphemisms among the Dagaaba?

1.7 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the research is to understand the extent to which euphemisms are used in the Dagaaba culture. It aims to investigate the Dagaaba employment of euphemisms as a strategy of indirection, including their functions in communication and the influence modernization has on the use of euphemisms as a strategy of indirection in communication.

1.8 Significance of the study

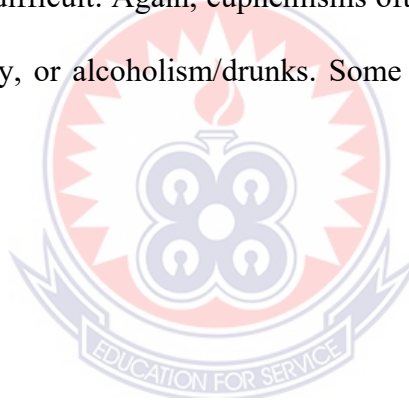
Writing is the foundation of all language development. Thus, academicians must write. Because writing about a language makes academic contributions to our understanding of language and also helps to preserve and value the cultural legacy that is connected to that language.

Since the goal of any study is to bridge a gap and solve a specific problem, the findings of this research will offer priceless insights into the communication patterns of the Dagaaba people. A deeper understanding of the Dagaaba people's language, culture, and social dynamics can be gained by examining euphemism as a strategy of indirection in communication. Again, this research can add to the already existing literature on

euphemisms. It can also be used as reference material for students who will pursue studies similar to this topic.

1.9 Limitation

Owo-Ewie (2017), postulates that the limitation indicates the possible weakness of the study. In the process of this investigation, the researcher encountered some potential weakness and challenges. The meaning and use of euphemisms often depend on context, including the speaker, audience, and social setting. Capturing this variability in a systematic way was very difficult. Again, euphemisms often relate to taboo and unpleasant topics like death, sexuality, or alcoholism/drunks. Some participants were uncomfortable discussing such topics.



1.10 Delimitation

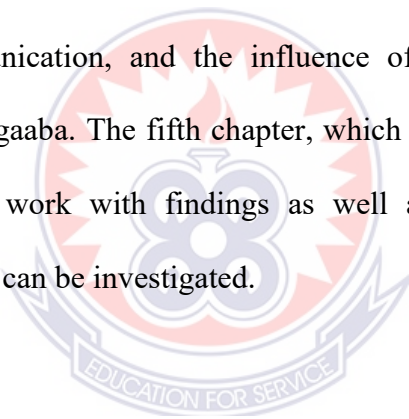
This study is centered on the Dagaaba in the northwestern part of Ghana in the Upper West Region. The study confines itself to only euphemisms as a strategy of indirection in communication among the Dagaaba.

1.11 Organization of the Study

The study is divided into five chapters. The first chapter contains the introduction and dwells on the background of the study, the background of the language, and the speakers of the language. Statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study,

limitation, and delimitation are all embedded in this first chapter. Though the objectives of the study and research questions are stated in the first chapter, but are thoroughly discussed in chapter four (4). The second chapter of this study looks at what other scholars have done about the current study. In the third chapter, the methodology used in the study is been discussed. The strategies/techniques used by the researcher to collect data for this study were fervently discussed and analyzed.

A detailed discussion of the data of this study is done in the fourth chapter. The analyses were focused on euphemism as a strategy of indirection; by discussing the themes and context within which euphemistic expressions are used among the Dagaaba, the functions of euphemism in communication, and the influence of modernization on the use of euphemism among the Dagaaba. The fifth chapter, which is the final chapter of the study, summarizes the research work with findings as well as recommends other areas of indirection in Dagaare that can be investigated.



1.12 Summary of Chapter One

In chapter one, after successfully introducing the research topic, I went ahead to look at the background of the study, the background of the language (Dagaare), and the speakers of the language (Dagaare). In addition, I have clearly stated the problem of the study and also looked at the purpose and significance of the study. Again, the objectives of the study, research questions, limitations, and delimitation were not exempted in this chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Introduction

This chapter takes a look at some works that are pertinent to this present study. It talks about the ideas and discussions that people have raised concerning the notion of culture. It continues with an overview of what pragmatics entails. It looks at the concept of indirection, and strategies of indirection. Additionally, literature is reviewed on euphemisms, and the functions of euphemism, which forms the fundamental of this present research. Moreover, it reviews some related literature on euphemisms in some cultures. The chapter also presents the theory that supports this study.

2.1 The notion of culture

It is worthwhile to discuss culture since euphemisms in communication are context and culture-based. The idea has been defined in a variety of ways by different scholars. Taylor (1871), asserts that culture is a complex whole that includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. Similarly, Li and Karakowsky (2001), assert that culture is the collective body of information that a group has accumulated over generations through individual and collective effort. This includes beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notion of time, roles, spatial relations, and the universe. It also includes material objects and possessions that the people have accumulated. They continued by saying that tradition is the entirety of a group of people's taught behaviours that are typically passed down from

generation to generation and are thought to constitute those people's heritage. Keesing (1974), posits that culture is a set of customs that have helped people overcome adaptation issues by generating concepts and ideas. Fiske, Kitayama, and Nisbet (1998), culture is the culmination of norms, religious beliefs, forms of expression, rules of conduct, and other human-made components for a community of individuals who were living in a similar environment and language around the same time.

Concluding the above notions about the concept of culture, it is clear that the term “culture” refers to anything that exists within a specific community. Thus, beliefs, communication strategies, dress codes, and rituals that identify them as a distinct social group is culture.

2.2 The concept of pragmatics

Speakers do not always convey the real meaning of their utterances when they communicate with their interlocutors. In everyday interactions, people utilize language to communicate. People must understand it because it has the power to disclose ideas and concepts. One can make many different meanings from someone saying, "The chief walking staff has broken." It may indicate to the hearer that the speaker is just notifying him/her about the broken staff of the chief. The speaker may also be implying that they need someone to help them buy new staff for the chief, though. Because there are multiple ways to interpret a speech, the hearer also needs context or situational history to understand the speaker's goal. A person must consider context in addition to language structure while attempting to understand the intentions of others, as there are numerous ways in which a

statement can be understood. In the context of death among the Dagaaba, “The chief walking staff has broken” is a euphemistic expression that announces the death of the chief. Although it might be difficult to define, pragmatics is a science that studies language use and the situations in which it occurs (Stadler, 2013). Pragmatics is defined as the "study of language in action". Stadler states that one of the issues facing this discipline is that cross-cultural communication requires more than just language skills, such as vocabulary and grammar. Some contend that meaning is context-dependent and that language knowledge alone is not always sufficient to convey meaning (Stadler, 2013). These cultural references fluctuate from language to language and culture to culture, and it is noted that there is not enough research on the variations in pragmatics and conventions on appropriate verbal behaviour in various contexts (Schneider, 2011).

Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that examines how people use language in context to create meaning. It focuses on the tools that are used to convey meaning, such as a language's vocabulary and pattern of usage. According to Griffiths (2006, p. 1), pragmatics is the study of the relationship between the context in which language is used and the knowledge that the speakers have of the world around them. In other words, pragmatics investigates how people use language to communicate effectively in different situations. According to Thomas (1995, p. 2), pragmatics is concerned with interpreting the utterance and the speaker's meaning. For the speaker to make suitable and understandable utterances, it also focuses on how the speaker's context affects what they say. Accordingly, the study of contextual meaning might be characterized as pragmatics. It investigates the connections between speakers of various languages and their forms (Yule, 1996, p. 4). This indicates that pragmatics examines both the language and how language users use it. Yule, (1996),

further said that pragmatics is the study of contextual meaning, which entails interpreting remarks made by individuals within certain contexts and how those contexts affect the meaning of those words. Again, Yule (2016) postulates that it is possible to refer to pragmatics as the study of intended speaker meaning. He claims that pragmatics is the study of "invisible" meaning, or how we discern what is meant even when it isn't stated or written. Meanwhile, Leech (1983) described pragmatics as the study of how words have meaning in certain contexts.

Agyekum (2019) posits that pragmatics provides an explanation for meaning that is not achievable by a literal interpretation of words or structures. This suggests that metaphorical language can support practical deductions and interpretations, and examples of this include idioms and proverbs. Crystal (1997) described pragmatics as the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction, and the effect their use of language has on their participants in the act of communication.

Concerning the definitions and notions of pragmatics that were previously discussed, pragmatics is the study of how speakers might generate the most effective utterances to convey their intended meaning in the context of language.

To summarize, in pragmatics it is fundamental that the hearer can identify the real meaning of the speaker's utterance considering the context within which those utterances are made and then cooperate and react appropriately.

2.2.1. Context

Every language event takes place at a specific location and is attended by a certain number of people. The environment of language is thus one in which every speech can be interpreted in light of its context. Everything about humans changes, including language. The context, that is the situation, contributes meaning to speeches and how such speeches are made. Although it can be challenging to define context, it's critical to recognize the differences between ambiguity in written and spoken language. The entire social environment in which a speech event occurs is referred to as the context (Bilmes, 1986). It is to be regarded as the constantly changing environment, in the broadest sense, that allows the participants in the communication process to engage, and in which the verbal manifestation of their interaction becomes understandable. The interpretation of referring statements is strongly influenced by context (Yule, 1996).

The capacity to evaluate meaning in context is necessary for comprehending language used in communication (Leinonen, Ryder, Ellis, & Mammond, 2003). Pragmatics comprehension is defined as the capacity to use context to understand language (Loukusa, Leinonen, Jussila, Mattila, Ryder, Ebeling & Moilanen, 2007). Contextual information is all the information that is used when interpreting an expression in a particular situation. Effective manipulation of contextual information can support language users in handling communication with competence, particularly in complex situations. Context can therefore give language users access to authentic pragmatic meaning, enable true pragmatic behaviours, and permit the use of linguistic resources to comprehend language in use.

A crucial aspect of pragmatics, according to Yule (2006), is that during discussions, "more is communicated than said." A conversational environment typically shapes our

understanding of the true meaning of the message being communicated. Finegan (2004, p. 8) explains that conversationists cannot comprehend utterances just based on their expression alone. She claims that: besides meaning and expression, then, the base of language used is context, and language can be best viewed in three-sided figures comprising expression, meaning, and context.

Yule (2006, p. 114) distinguishes between two kinds of context: linguistic and physical. Linguistic context, often called co-text, refers to the significance of the words and phrases that surround the word under study. Physical context takes the term under examination's actual surroundings into account. This technique can be used, for instance, to decipher a notification or a sign. Pridham (2001) asserts that "the people speaking, the relationship between them, the circumstances they are talking in, the subject matter, and their purpose for talking" all have an impact on each discussion. When taking into account all of the previously mentioned characteristics, the participants can typically determine the speaker's intended message with ease.

Considering the concept of context above, context is very important for understanding how meaning is constructed and interpreted in communication. Context includes various elements such as the physical setting, social dynamics, cultural background, and prior discourse between interlocutors. These factors collectively influence how speakers encode messages and how listeners decode them, allowing for meanings that extend beyond the literal content of utterances. In short, effective communication relies on contextual knowledge between interactants.

2.2.2. Meaning

Meaning is one of the main issues in the study of indirection in pragmatics. Levinson (1986), postulates that pragmatics studies the meaning of utterances, whereas semantics studies the meaning of sentences. The study of certain types, such as “speaker meaning”, “context meaning,” (Yule, 1996), “meaning in use,” and “meaning in context,” (Thomas, 1995) is another way to characterize pragmatics. Leech (1983) posits that pragmatics defines meaning as the comprehension of utterances within a certain context that a speaker or language user has. Yalom (1980) asserts that meaning is an “anxiety emollient”. Words just don’t have meaning; the speaker and the listener don’t make meaning either. As stated by Thomas (1995), meaning-making is a process that includes the speaker and the listener negotiating meaning as well as the context of the speech and its possible meaning. Parks (2000), asserts that the search for a sense of connection, pattern, order, and significance... is a way to understand our experience that makes sense of both the expected and unexpected, this is what it means to look for meaning, since it aids in our understanding of the world (Nash & Murray, 2010). Marinoff (1999), posits that meaning has to do with how you understand your life on an ongoing basis. As to Nash and Murray (2010), meaning is advisable to be understood in terms of the interpretations, narrative frameworks, philosophical rationales and views, and religion or belief systems that each of us contributes to the diverse worlds in which we live, work, learn, love and worship.

The concept of meaning extends beyond the literal interpretation of words to include the inferred intentions and implied messages in communication. It is agreed that meaning is shaped by context, which involves the situational, social, and cultural background as well as the relationships between the interlocutors.

2.2.3. Implicature

Paul Herbert Grice first proposed the idea of an implicature in 1975. He noted that in communication, “what is meant” frequently extends beyond “what is said”, and that this extra meaning is inferred and foreseeable. Davis (1998), asserts that the act of meaning or implying something by saying something else is referred to as “implicature.” The word, “implicature” comes from the verb “to imply.” The technical terms “implicature” and “implicate” refer to “implying something by saying something else,” therefore, implicature under Grice’s definition means that information that is not explicitly expressed is communicated to a listenership that can deduce what is being said by making use of linguistic or cultural norms that are being blatantly broken.

A brief conversation between two friends can serve as an illustration of this phenomenon.

Bayɔɔ: Do you have plans to eat out tonight?

Dakurah: My wife has returned from her trip.

There appears to be little coherence in the conversation, leading one to believe that Dakurah does not respond to Bayɔɔ inquiry. However, if implicature is used, the dialogue becomes quite clear and Dakurah will not be going to the restaurant because his wife is back and will cook.

Obeng (2003) points out that implicature is one of the qualities of discourse, and “cancel ability” is one of the five traits of implicature. Meanwhile, Obeng (1994) asserts that this provides the speaker with a certain level of security. By utilizing indirect techniques like evasion, metaphor, circumlocution, innuendo, proverb, euphemism, etc., he demonstrates, for instance, how the Akan who talk indirectly benefit from communicational immunity.

2.3.0 Indirection

Different academics have examined the phenomenon of verbal indirection and thus have given different definitions of the concept. Indirectness is frequently used in non-verbal communication as well as verbal communication as a communication approach to accomplish specific objectives. Underlying phenomena like irony, euphemism, metaphor, proverb, and understatement is a wide concept known as indirectness, which can have many different aspects. A thorough comprehension of conversational organization will have to wait for a sufficient explanation of indirect communication since, in a sense; all interpretation in context is indirect (Brown and Levinson, 1978). Indirection, according to Obeng (1994), is “a communicative strategy wherein interlocutors abstain or keep away from directness to prevent crises or to communicate “difficulty” and ensure that their utterances are consistent with face-saving and politeness”.

Tannen (1994) posits that indirection is a vital component of human communication. She argues that everyone occasionally and under specific situations uses indirect communication techniques; we all intend more than we say and infer meaning from other people in addition to what they say. Even though indirection is utilized in practically every culture, Tannen (1994) notes that indirection is one of the discourse characteristics that varies the most between cultures and can lead to misunderstandings. This suggests that the degree and kind of indirectness differ even within cultures where the phenomenon is present. When communicating indirectly, they make every effort to avoid disagreement, stress, and uncomfortable situations, just as Joyce (2012), postulates that the communication exchange's goals are to preserve harmony and face. Joyce's (2012) perspective is reinforced by Peace Corp's (2012) explanation of how individuals form

profound and frequently unconscious understandings of what is expected in a high-context society which may be relatively homogeneous and tends to emphasize interdependence and social ties. Owing to mutual expressions regarding conduct, the speaker can modify the context to communicate information without causing discomfort or strain.

Thomas (1995), asserts that when an utterance's expressed meaning diverges from the speaker's suggested or intended meaning, it is referred to as indirectness. An indirect illocutionary act necessitates the sharing of background knowledge between the speaker and the listener as well as the listener's capacity for inference. Since indirectness is thought to exist in all natural languages, it is a universal phenomenon. Oyetade (2000), posits that verbal indirection is a communicative technique where participants steer clear of directness to avert crises and accomplish a "certain communicative momentary goal." Verbal indirection can therefore be found in a variety of idioms, including proverbs, metaphors, euphemisms, circumlocutions, honorifics, and mild or courteous insults. Similar to Oyetade, Hope (2015) describes (verbal) indirection as "a speech form which moves around the main purpose of the interactions; still to put the message across" instead of speaking directly about something or getting right to the point.

One of the most important components of conversational style, according to Tannen (2006), is indirectness. It means, to her, that speakers can convey their intentions without having to state them exactly. According to her, speakers are unable to fully convey their meaning through their use of language. It is not appropriate to clearly state many meanings. Receivers must "read between the lines," "consider previous conventions" and "expectations about what will be said" to comprehend such meanings. Furthermore, they must possess knowledge of the "culturally accepted meanings connected to specific

expressions." Thomas (1995) therefore asserts that "a mismatch between the expressed meaning and the implied meaning" is necessary for indirectness to occur. In Searle's (1975) documentation, indirectness occurs when one illocutionary act is carried out indirectly through the execution of another. The primary goal of being indirect is to preserve the hearer's dignity while also expressing civility (Goffman, 1959). Because of this, many people choose to politely convey their disagreeable views rather than speaking them out loud. This is done to prevent disputes, arguments, and confrontations-especially between those who are close. To keep the peace in the community, everyone must be able to communicate.

It is observed that indirection is a linguistics phenomenon that is mostly employed in our everyday interaction by interlocutors all over the globe. As a linguistic strategy in communication, it is the careful selection of words by the speaker while understanding the circumstance (context), taking into account the relationship between interactants, and keeping the situational history in mind to present his message indirectly to avoid consequences. This indicates that while communicating with others, interlocutors make every effort to preserve their relationships by using indirection to express ideas that would sound undesirable if spoken directly.

2.3.1 Motives of indirection in communication

In communication, indirection can serve various motives depending on the context and the individuals involved.

2.3.1.1 Politeness as a motive of indirectness in communication

Indirection is often used to convey sensitive or potentially offensive messages more strategically, preserving social harmony and avoiding confrontation. One widely discussed motive is politeness, regard for face, and face management. Extensive research has been conducted by scholars including Leech, Lakoff, Brown, Levinson, and others to examine how indirectness is used in interpersonal relationships. Based on their understanding of Searle (1975) and Grice (1975), their methods are precisely those that have discussion toward the association of indirectness with politeness. They saw indirectness as a way to be kind and connected it to politeness. For instance, Leech (1983) noted that there may be a lot of complexity in the link between politeness and indirectness. The wish to feel accepted by others and the social distance between the speaker and the hearer can also have a big impact on how we arrange and interpret an utterance's politeness. For example, Searle (1975), Leech (1983), Brown & Levinson (1987), and others have all consistently claimed that the primary motivation for using indirect language is politeness. Studies on non-conventional indirectness corroborate the existing disagreement by arguing that the use of indirectness is motivated more by a high degree of deniability potential than by a concern for politeness.

2.3.1.2. Self-protection as a motive of indirectness in communication

The concept of “face” in communication was initially introduced by Goffman. Goffman (1959) asserts that a person’s “face” is a sacred object and that it is imperative for communicators to pay attention to it. Face desires are reciprocal, meaning that to have one’s face taken care of; one must also take care of the faces of others. Zhang & You

(2009), assert that everyone tries to preserve their face while also shielding the faces of others. Others have the power to decide whether or not someone can save face. The best course of action for someone who does not want to lose their face is to avoid hurting other people's faces. For this reason, protecting oneself is the main reason to avoid insulting others.

For instance: *Could you possibly lend me your bike this afternoon?*

If one wants to borrow something from others, the conventional indirectness of a question form is usually used. The speaker is technically asking permission to make a request. By being indirect, the speaker is making it less obvious that he expects the hearer to comply. On the surface, at least, this provides greater freedom for the hearer to refuse. Even if the hearer refuses, he will use polite language so as not to cause embarrassment to the requester, such as “Sorry, I will use it this afternoon”. However, it is another case if the requester asks in a direct and usually rude manner, such as: *Lend me your bike this afternoon.*

With the imperative form, the speaker issues an order. It sounds rather impolite, abrupt, and even insolent. What is more, it may cause antipathy in the requestee towards to speaker. As a result, the requestee will not be friendly to the requester either by showing him an indifferent face or just saying: “No, I do not want to lend it to you.” On hearing this, the requester will certainly get embarrassed and feel his face lost. So, indirectness is very important for self-protection (Zhang & You, 2009).

2.3.1.3. Humour as a motive of indirectness in communication

Humour frequently relies significantly on indirection in communication and accomplishes several important goals, including easing tension, establishing a connection, providing amusement and delight, encouraging creativity, and expressing taboo subjects among others.

For instance:

1. Client: Waiter, please! My soup has a fly in it.
2. Waiter: there isn't an additional fee, so don't worry.

The customer's illocutionary intention in this really bad joke is grievance. However, because the term "fly" has a different connotation, the waiter purposefully misinterprets it, breaking the Cooperative Principle's Maxim of Relevance. He turns his back on any possible difficulties and interprets it as a compliment to avoid bringing up the fact, which adds to the humour. People develop humour as a form of civilization when they encounter a common situation in their daily lives. It allows us to lightly convey our honesty, kindness, and generosity. Not only can humour make people laugh, but it may also lubricate relationships (Zhang & You, 2009).

2.3.1.4. Rejection or denial as a motive of indirectness in communication

Zhang & You (2009) posit that when you disagree with someone's viewpoint, decline their request, or simply want to voice your own, you should exercise extreme caution in how you express yourself. Avoid giving blunt rejections or expressing your disagreement in public. One typical method in this situation is to provide justifications for the rejection or

denial rather than directly expressing it. To keep both parties' faces integral and prevent embarrassment, one can convey their meaning wisely by using this method. You don't have to apologize since you don't explicitly reject or deny someone; conversely, if you reject someone outright, you have to sort of explain yourself or apologize, which causes needless problems in conversational communication. At times, individuals merely express a sense of negative meaning indirectly, revealing one's wit and humour.

2.4. Strategies of indirection in communication

Indirection is commonly used in conversations among the Dagaaba; communication strategies are employed while using indirection in a situational context. These strategies consist of evasion, circumlocution, innuendo, hedging, proverbs, euphemisms, sarcasm, etc. An instance where indirection is used well among the Dagaaba is the chief's palace or traditional court, borrowing, marriage, funerals, rivalry, arbitration talks and our everyday interactions.

2.4.1. Euphemism

The word "euphemism" has a Greek etymology and means "to speak favourably" (Pan, 2013). It is a phenomenon that occurs everywhere. It is so important to human communication that it would be impossible for there to be any conversation without resorting to it. Euphemisms function as a softening mechanism, helping speakers avoid direct mention of taboo subjects or socially delicate issues. These expressions vary across cultures but often target topics such as death, sex, illness, and other taboo subjects in

society. Euphemism is a strategy for accomplishing indirectness (Bakhtiar, 2012, Obeng, 1994). For instance, expressions such as "gone to his reward", "kicked the bucket", and "passed away" may be used to convey that X died (Avraham, 2008, p. 40). Euphemisms are “powerful linguistic tools that are embedded so deeply in our language that few of us, even those who pride themselves on being plainspoken, never get through a day without using them,” (Rawson, 1981).

Hornby (2005) asserts that euphemisms are terms or expressions that covertly allude to an unsuitable, unpleasant, or embarrassing situation to make it seem more acceptable. Meanwhile, Blackwell, (1981, p. 45), defines euphemism as “the practice of referring to something offensive or delicate in terms that make it sound more pleasant.” Similarly, Larson (1984, p. 116) states that “euphemism is used to avoid an offensive or socially unacceptable expression.”

Sanderson (1999, p. 259) is of the view that euphemism can be used as a way of being vague and unclear, or to cover up the truth or reality of a situation. Euphemisms are replacements for disliked terms that are employed to prevent potential face-saving situations, according to Allan and Burridge (1991). The expression that is disliked could be too negative to effectively convey a speaker’s message on a particular occasion, or it could be taboo, frightening, repulsive, or for some other cause.

Based on the definitions given above, euphemisms are purposely used to either euphemize prohibited terms or cover the truth. Among the Dagaaba, just like other cultures in Africa, euphemism is a communication strategy that enables interlocutors to pass down their

messages without hindrance. With euphemism as an indirect strategy, verbal taboos are easily communicated.

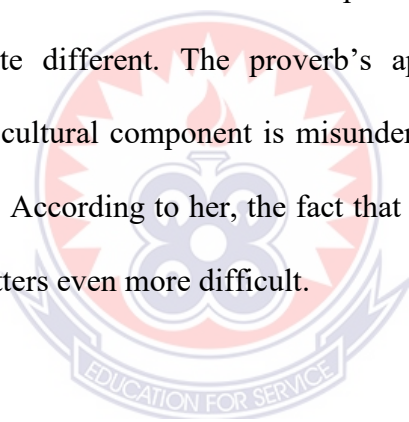
2.4.2. Proverb

The usage of proverbs in language and communication is a pervasive phenomenon that holds great importance. In the African environment, proverbs are almost used when communicating successfully, especially when the speaker is discussing topics that touch on institutions, values, conventions, and the entire field of human experience. Odebunmi (2008), posits that a proverb is a tool for communication that is used to explain and communicate a variety of social, cultural, natural, and other events and behaviours. To help members of the public receive a cultural education, proverbs are woven throughout songs, riddles, stories, and other traditional institutions (Finnegan, 2012). Constantius (2007), is of the view that proverb stimulate listeners' minds with a sequence of cognitive activities that pique their curiosity and help them to understand their meaning.

Yankah (1997) asserts that proverbs are extremely ambiguous in that the storyteller uses them as a language decoy to express disapproval of authority because of their oppressive and vengeful nature, which protects both his reputation and that of his social connections. He added that proverbs have principles ingrained in them that are generally understandable to the general public, just like other genres like folktales. A proverb is also a succinct, humorous description of an experience that is repeated to achieve a social goal (Yusuf, 1998). In a similar spirit, Akporoboro (2008) postulates that a proverb is a brief proverbial statement that typically takes the shape of concisely stated moral guidance or truth.

Proverbs are ingeniously constructed belief statements that people use as a face-saving tactic to enable them to communicate unpleasant things in a more positive way (Alimi, 2012).

Proverbs are also employed to condense life's lessons and allow the hearer to make their deductions and apply them to their conduct going forward. Finnegan (1970) contends that proverbs are highly context- and culture-dependent, meaning that they can only be comprehended within the cultural context in which they are said. This is because proverbs have deep metaphorical significance and are ingrained in African peoples' everyday activities and struggles. She contends that if taken apart from their cultural context, they can mean something quite different. The proverb's application depends on cultural allusions; therefore, if the cultural component is misunderstood, the proverb's main point may be overlooked or lost. According to her, the fact that a proverb might have more than one meaning can make matters even more difficult.



2.4.3. Circumlocution

The ability to employ communication strategies such as circumlocution in conversation is essential in developing communicative competence. Hedge (2000), asserts that circumlocution is concerned with how to use different kinds of strategies... to express something when language resources are lacking.” Circumlocution is a communication strategy that can be simply defined as using a description of an object, concept, place, or action in place of the target vocabulary. An example will be a situation where a speaker says, “It a long, yellow fruit. Monkeys like it” when the word ‘banana’ exists. A strategy

known as circumlocution is used to describe or clarify the meaning of the target expression by elaborating on its features, such as size, colour, shape, or function. In other words, employing a large number of words to explain something for which a short form exists is the term circumlocution (Smyth, 1920). The usage of circumlocution refers to the use of unnecessary words and indirect language to delay getting to the point, which contrasts with conciseness. Though circumlocution is usually regarded as a stylistic vice in writing, it can be used for comic effect. Yemeni speakers, for instance, refrain from using these terms by substituting more acceptable terms for forbidden ones in various contexts (Qanbar, 2011). Circumlocution is another pragmatic strategy of indirectness (Agyekum, 2008). It refers to the process of “talking around a subject, using an unnecessarily large number of words, or evasive language.”

According to Bach and Harnish (1979, p. 99) in circumlocutory utterances, “the speaker compromises the presumption of the manner to avoid the offense to the hearer or embarrassment to himself that explicit language would endanger.” Thus, instead of saying the following speech to a “target guest”:

- a. It’s about time you got here.

One can say the same thing “more tactfully” as in:

- b. We were beginning to worry about you.

Both speeches denote that the guest is coming late, but the second is more polite.

Hope (2015) postulates that “among the Akans, an interactant engaged in circumlocution may broach a topic by beginning from the root of the problem and working his way gradually to the circumstances which may have led to the difficult situation in which he

finds himself. Such an interactant ‘sometimes gives away delicate but irrelevant domestic information to justify his cause’. The person uses circumlocution as a face-maintenance device. Circumlocution as a strategy used in indirection is employed when a person is asking for a favor or borrowing. Thus, circumlocution is employed by speakers to demonstrate self-respect and consideration for other interactants. From the Akan socio-cultural point of view, it is not nice for somebody who wants a favour or wants to borrow from another person (especially an elderly person) to go straight to the point. If he/she goes straight to the point, the borrower may be despised". Similarly, like the Akan, the Dagaaba do not also go straightforward in time of borrowing or asking for a favour from another, instead, they wine around the clock in order to save their face.

2.4.4. Evasion

Evasion can simply be explained as an act of dodging or avoiding a situation (Hope, 2015). According to Bull and Mayer (1988, p. 10), "a speaker could only be said to have evaded a question if for example he or she provides a response not located on a positive/negative continuum when asked a yes/no question." The statements imply that evasion is one method of using indirection. This strategy used in indirection is often seen at the chief's palace or traditional court. When an accused person realizes that he/she is about to lose a case, he/she begins to use the trick mentioned above, i.e. by refusing to answer certain questions or giving long and confusing answers to simple questions, just to pave his/her way through (hope, 2015). According to Agyekum (2008), evasion “involves circumvention or avoiding answering directly or avoiding facing up to real difficult or tricky communicative or discourse issues.”

Galasinki (2000, p. 55) asserts that evasion is a way politicians make use of to steer away from giving honest and significant information. Politicians resort to evasion when they are forced to answer orally to issues that raise the possibility of embarrassing incidents. When politicians attempt to evade answering the questions they are asked, it is called evasion. In short, refusing to answer a question is the same as evading it (Obeng, 1997, p. 54). Also, Vukovic (2013) posits that context serves as the primary catalyst for avoidance in political interviews. He disagrees with the notion that evasion is a consistent aspect of a politician's character. The use of evasion by the same politician is not fixed. More specifically, in certain interviews, he or she might employ a high level of evasion, while in others, it might be lessened. Interviewers can react to politicians' use of avoidance in political interviews, as noted by (Clayman & Heritage, 2002). They contend that one of the most important characteristics of a competent interviewer is the ability to counter politicians' avoidance of questions. But occasionally, despite noticing it, interviewers "let it [evasion] pass."

The above scholars have looked at evasion as an indirectness strategy in a political context but that is very similar to how the Dagaaba employ evasion as an indirection strategy in their situational or cultural context. The Dagaaba also employ evasion as a means of dodging questions in order to avoid some repercussions.

2.4.5. Innuendo

The word “innuendo” has a Latin source that means “by nodding at” or “by pointing to” (Cresswell, 2002, p. 224). Innuendo is one strategy people use to interact with one another, according to Tray (2005). It is defined as “statements directed with humorous intent or faux naïveté that carry an implicit derogatory meaning directed at a specific target.” He notes that an innuendo is “a hint or sly remark or an insinuation that is usually derogatory.” In other words, innuendos are stories where characters tend to hint rather than state things out loud. When speakers convey meaning through innuendo, listeners can deduce what they mean based on presumptions about their common history (Walton, 2000, p. 15). There are numerous contexts in which innuendos might be used, including “surrogate language” “folk songs,” “popular music,” “praise songs,” “chants,” and “dirges.” Additionally, people utilize this strategy when they ask others to do things for them or when they apologize to them-acts that put their faces in danger (Obeng, 2002, p. 13).

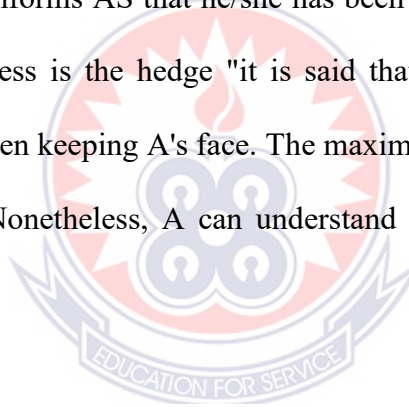
Bell (1997) observes that political language is dominated by innuendos. According to Obeng (Obeng, 2002, p. 13), politicians frequently craft innuendos by making “an oblique allusion or an insinuation involving a veiled reflection on the character or reputation of another political actor.” Innuendos can be recognised and realized by those they are directed towards, which are politicians' adversaries. Individuals responses to them can also be expressed by them (Obeng, 1997). Meanwhile, Obeng (1994) posits that innuendo is distinguished by its users’ avoidance of making direct references to it, which prevents its targets from responding straightforwardly.

2.4.6. Hedge

According to Crystal (2008, p. 227), a hedge is a pragmatic approach to indirectness. Farr (2011) posits that the term "hedges" describes the techniques employed by authors and speakers to minimize their words in order to maintain their composure. When hedges are used, information "is likely to be presented as an opinion rather than a fact," according to Hyland (2005, p. 52). For instance:

- A. Do you think I am qualified to be employed by your esteemed company?
- B. It is said that your interview has failed.

B, in a roundabout way, informs AS that he/she has been refused to work in the company. The achiever of indirectness is the hedge "it is said that." This hedge lessens the harsh effect of refusing A and then keeping A's face. The maxims of quantity, quality and manner are not observed by B. Nonetheless, A can understand B's implication (Chen, 2010, p. 148).



2.4.7. Sarcasm

Sarcasm is a frequent way to express criticism, either in public or privately, according to Tannen (1992). It is a preferred method of criticism because of how indirect they are. Tannen (1992) observed that when sarcasm is used, some form of indirectness is used. Agyekum (2007) posits that sarcasm is a type of linguistic irony in which the speaker, who appears to be giving great praise, actually withdraws behind the screen to express their intense, personal displeasure to the addressee. He uses a roundabout way to draw attention to the use of sarcasm. He emphasizes once more how sarcasm always ends up sending a

harsh message. Meanwhile, sarcasm is also seen by Mount (2012) to be a particular type of irony that is intended to be piercing and painful.

2.5. The concept of euphemisms

Euphemisms have been a part of human language throughout recorded history and have been a tool used to mitigate the directness in which potentially offensive, harsh, or taboo subjects were delineated. The tradition can be dated back to ancient civilizations when people recognized there was a need for discussing delicate matters in an agreeable form. According to McArthur, (1992, p. 387) the English term “euphemism” derives its etymology from the Greek word “euphemism,” which has the prefix “eu,” which means “good” or “well” and the root “phemi,” which means “speaking.” Thus, the term as a whole signifies “speaking well”. Neaman and Silver (1983) claim in a historical assessment that euphemism was a linguistic phenomenon that was most prevalent in religious issues.

Allan and Burridge, (1991) opine that in ancient Egypt, the term "the beautiful west" was a euphemism for death, as it referred to the afterlife, which was believed to be located in the west where the sun sets. Similarly, Rawson (1981) asserts that the Greeks employed euphemisms in religious contexts to avoid offending the gods. For instance, instead of saying "the Furies," who were vengeful spirits, the Greeks referred to them as “the Eumenides,” meaning “the Kindly Ones”. During the Middle Ages, euphemisms were frequently used to navigate the rigid social and religious structures of the time. The Church, in particular, promoted the use of euphemisms to maintain decorum in discussions of sin and death. Terms like "passed away" instead of "died" and "fallen woman" for a woman

who had engaged in premarital sex became common during this period (Neaman & Silver, 1990). According to Allan and Burridge, (1991), the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries marked a period of increased sensitivity to matters of propriety, particularly in Victorian England. This era saw the expansion of euphemisms about bodily functions, sex, and death. For instance, the term "limb" was often used instead of "leg," as the latter was considered too suggestive. The use of euphemisms continued to evolve, reflecting changing social norms and sensitivities in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In modern times, euphemisms are often employed in political discourse, where terms like "collateral damage" are used to describe civilian casualties during military operations (Lutz, 1989). Similarly, in the corporate world, "downsizing" is a euphemism for mass layoffs (Burridge, 2012).

Several scholars have presented some definitions for euphemism. For instance, Willis and Klammer (1981), opine that euphemism is a mild or roundabout word or expression used instead of a more direct word or expression to make one's language delicate and inoffensive even to a squeamish person. Hudson (2000, p. 261) defines euphemism as "the extension of ordinary words and phrases to express unpleasant and embarrassing ideas". Similarly, Abrantes (2005) sees euphemism as a word or phrase used in a specific linguistic and extra-linguistic context to soften or conceal something unpleasant.

Burridge (2012, p. 66) defines euphemisms as "sweet-sounding, or at least inoffensive, alternative for expressions that speakers or writers prefer not to use in executing a particular communicative intention on a given occasion." Cameron (1995, p. 73) also defines euphemism as "a term used deliberately to avoid or soften the negative associations of words that deal directly with taboo subjects."

Wardaugh (1986, p. 237) asserts that euphemism refers to certain things that are not said. Not because people do not talk about those things, or, if those things are talked about, they are talked about in a roundabout way. Allan and Burridge (1991) postulate that euphemisms are the words (phrases) substituted for other words thought to be offensive to avoid the loss of face; either one's face or, by offending, that of the audience, or of some third party. These unpleasant or offensive expressions may be taboo, fearsome, distasteful, or for some other reason have too many connotations to execute a speaker's communicative intention on a given situation or occasion.

In this present study, euphemisms are looked at as a strategy of indirection in conversations among the Dagaaaba. Euphemism is not so much about using auspicious words per se as the deliberate avoidance of offensive or impolite ones. To this end, expressions that are comparatively favourable, less unpleasant, less distasteful, and less offensive are the preferred verbal choices. For instance, "journey", "departure", and "rest in peace", "endless sleep" are typical euphemisms of "death" across cultures. Similarly, "sleep with someone" is a common euphemism for "sexual intercourse" across languages. So these euphemistic expressions are resorted to indirectly to mitigate face in conversations.

2.6 Functions of euphemism

The functions of euphemisms are identified according to the way they contribute to the context of the conversation or the text. Euphemism, as a linguistic phenomenon, serves various functions in communication across different languages and cultures.

Meng (2016), asserts that in pragmatics functions of euphemism in communication, euphemism reflects some principles that are accepted by people from different points of view, such as, conduct principles, social habits, thinking patterns, aesthetic sentiments, value principles, and moral principles. According to Meng (2016, p. 415), the pragmatic functions of euphemism are;

1. Replace the linguistic taboo. This is restricted by the moral standards of society because some objects or thoughts are not allowed to be referred to straightforwardly. Therefore, they are often used out of politeness or consideration for other people's feelings. People mention them in a fuzzy and euphemistic manner. For instance: we would probably say to a friend "I'm sorry to hear your relationship with your brother has not been very smooth" instead of "I'm sorry to hear you often quarrel with your brother". Because the first assertion is more agreeable than the second one.
2. Conceal the essence of politics or military invasions. Meng (2016) points out that political life, especially political life in Western countries, is a gentle breed of fuzzy euphemism. For instance: developing countries (fuzzy)/ backward countries (precise). The disadvantage/the needy (fuzzy)/ the poor (precise).
3. Improve the status of occupation. Meng (2016) observes that to improve social status or personal reputation, euphemisms are also used to refer to occupations. To some extent, some jobs are considered to be inferior. As a result, many uplifting and fuzzy expressions are adopted to beautify the humble jobs, and common examples are as follows: maid (precise)/ domestic help (fuzzy), prostitute (precise)/street girl (fuzzy).

4. Conceal the essence of military invasion. War is cruel and always refers to blood and death. People who love peace all over the world strongly fight against war. According to Meng (2016), euphemism is the best coat in covering the bloody scenes of war for the politicians and invasion governments. For example strategic strike (fuzzy)/ retreat (precise), surgical strike (fuzzy)/surprise attack (precise). In addition, it was noted in his study that during the US-Viet Nam War, such fuzzy political euphemism is largely used in the American press, for instance; “the bombing, burning, and imprisonment” is fuzzed as “pacification”, “destroying corps” is fuzzed as “defoliation”, “war” is fuzzed as “conflict”, “aggression” is fuzzed as “police action”, “concentration camp” is fuzzed as “strategically village”.
5. Avoiding vulgarity was another function identified by Meng (2016). He asserts that in our daily lives, people prefer to use fuzzy words when we refer to something such as sex, procreation, evacuation or some parts of our body instead of direct expression to avoid vulgarity.
6. Avoid discrimination. Meng (2016) opines that to avoid prejudice or sympathy from others, there exist many words or expressions of euphemisms from ancient times to nowadays. For instance "poor" can be expressed in the following words: needy/underprivileged/the indigent/broke/low income/the economically deprived.

Euphemisms are employed to foster unity among members of the same group. They preserve insider information in situations involving illegal activity, therefore they resemble code words in certain ways. According to Burrige (2012), this is the role of social cohesiveness. When it comes to euphemisms that are used to conceal information about

illegal activity, they can be seen as both a protective tool and an aid for in-group identification. Furthermore, these euphemisms may be regarded as uplifting for the appropriate group if they improve the status of what they refer to. Slang terms about drugs and drug abuse are prime instances. For instance, some Marijuana users refer to themselves as herbivores or herbalists and use the term “potpreneur” when referring to the seller or dealer. Considering the definitions of euphemism in earlier discussions, taboo avoidance is a function of euphemism in language use. From the vantage point of effect as motivation, the fear of taboo inspires the desire for euphemism. Taboo is defined as that which is prohibited and thus unspeakable in a community, because the referent is “either ineffable sacred, like the name of God, or unspeakable vile, like cannibalism or incest” (Hughes, 2006, p. 462). Jing-Schmidt (2019, p. 393) considers the use of the euphemism "a linguistic consequence of the social sanction of verbal taboos", contending that the symbiotic relationship between taboo and euphemism "reflects the negative potency of taboo words and the social risks it implies, and the desirability of euphemism as a means of risk avoidance." Asaah (2006, p. 497) describes taboo as "behaviour and speech regulators" in a community where euphemism is at once the vehicle and the product of behavioural and linguistic regulations. Hughes (2006) asserts that taboo has increasingly come to refer to prohibitions against “socially unacceptable words, expressions, and topics, especially of sexual and racial nature.” Allan (2015) shows how religious taboos remained the most offensive until the early modern period when they gave to sexual and scatological taboos, the shock effect of which subsequently lessened when greater taboo was placed on offensive labels for people with disabilities by the late twentieth century.

Euphemism functions as a form of politeness strategy that language users use to save the face of themselves and the face of their addressees (Crespo, 2005). It is a way to avoid using taboos or threatening others. According to Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, euphemisms are a strategy used to mitigate face-threatening acts by softening the impact of words or phrases that might be considered harsh or impolite. This is consistent with what Allan and Burridge (1991, p. 7) stated: "Generally speaking, the greater the oncoming face-affront, the greater is the politeness shown, and the greater is the degree of euphemism required".

Burridge (2012) expands the functions of euphemism into six (6) categories, as follows:

Firstly, the protective euphemism as a shield and avoid forbidden.

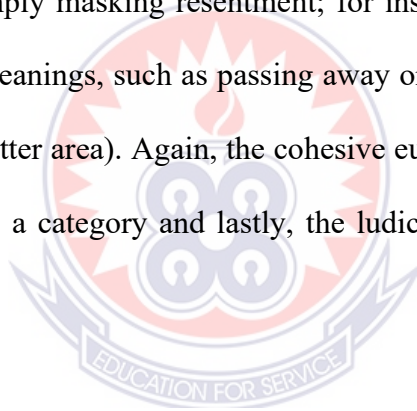
Euphemism is categorized as avoidance language and evasion expressions; before tackling a complex issue, a language user must possess the ability to communicate in diverse contexts, discuss subjects they would prefer not to discuss, and exhibit erratic behaviour in high-pressure situations. In its main function, euphemism is a word diversion used to address taboo. This encompasses the typical suspect's intimate areas, sexual relations, rage, deceit, physical ailments, motion sickness, illness, death, deadly animals, insanity, terror, and faith in God.

Secondly, the underhand euphemism to mystify and misrepresent is another classified function of euphemism. Euphemisms are dishonest expressions; they are used depending on the context; some taboos allow them, but they don't use the term directly. Euphemism from linguistic variants including medical, political, and military jargon, adds an extra

meaning to guile and secrecy to conceal. Using euphemisms involves deliberate deception and disguising the subject; it is not an attempt to conceal an offence.

The uplifting euphemism to talk up and to inflate was another category. Euphemisms are substitutes for words that the speakers would rather not use.

Another category of Burrige's (2012) function of euphemism is the provocative euphemism to reveal and to inspire. Euphemisms are thought to be provocative means of expression and motivation. There is more to using provocative euphemisms than just being direct and polite. However, more commonplace euphemisms that serve as face-saving tactics can go beyond simply masking resentment; for instance, the euphemism for death can convey a variety of meanings, such as passing away or solace that comes with starting a new life (moving to a better area). Again, the cohesive euphemism to show solidarity and to help define the gang is a category and lastly, the ludic euphemism to have fun and to entertain.



2.7 Review of related literature

Farghal (1995) examined the use of euphemistic expressions in Arabic using the Politeness principles (Leech 1983) and the Cooperative Principle's conversational maxims (Grice 1975). His analysis was based on the standard form of Arabic and colloquial Jordanian Arabic. According to Farghal (1995), Arabs use four types of euphemisms: figurative expressions, circumlocutions, remoulding, and antonyms. Farghal focused on the relationship between the Cooperative Principle by Grice and the Politeness Principle by Leech. The study indicated that Arabic euphemisms violate at least one of Grice's

conversational maxims, including lexical and structural choices. Farghal observed that death-related expressions are often euphemistic, and the standard Arabic language has many euphemistic terms.

Warren (1992) proposed a model for constructing euphemisms or what is called euphemistic strategies. He suggested four main devices for euphemism formation. There are several sub-categories for each euphemism-constructing device as discussed in his study. His concept assumed that language creates meanings based on circumstances or contexts. The acceptance of a new word depends on several factors, including its negative connotation for the referent. This is why euphemism expressions are used. He concluded that further secondary strategies may be utilized to create euphemisms.

Similarly, in a diachronic study of euphemism creation, Ham (2005) examined how social norms influence how people use euphemisms to discuss sex. The study analyzed euphemistic expressions relating to sex in three British novels: *Emma*, *Lady Chatterly's Lover*, and *Well Groomed*. The data were examined using Warren's (1992) model of euphemism formation. The investigation indicated that some euphemistic utterances were not related to that of Warren's euphemism formation devices. To address this, Ham added two subcategories to Warren's model which were: deletion under Phonemic Modification and naming under Semantic innovation.

Arif (2015) did a study on the social and cognitive implications of using euphemisms in English. Her focus was to identify the main functions of euphemism in modern society. She claimed that decent words may undergo euphemistic substitutions just because the speaker may feel that the expressions he/she uses may offend the listener. The study shows that in

modern society the initial role of euphemisms has been strongly modified. She concluded that it can easily be perceived the need for euphemistic replacement as a means of politeness is gradually fading, and instead, the need for euphemizing as a means of veiling the cruel reality of modern life is increasing. Euphemisms will always be used in language as a means by which political leaders can conceal their wrongdoings and present life as more politically, economically, and socially stable as long as there is poverty, violence, and economic instability in the world.

Fernández (2006) explored the euphemistic language on obituary pages from the mid-nineteenth century. The study traced an account of the different metaphors aiming at substituting the notion of death and dying in Irish early Victorian newspapers. The Conceptual Metaphor Theory by Lakoff (1980) was used in his study. The results obtained supported the idea that there was a tendency to present sentimental obituaries in which the taboo of death can be accounted for by various conceptual metaphors, most of which view death as a desirable event under the influence of Christian beliefs.

Fitriani, Syarif, and Wahyuni (2019) conducted a study on the topic “Euphemism used by men and women in the Indonesia Lawyers Club TV One Show: A language and gender perspective”. Their study shows how euphemism was used by men and women in the 'Indonesia Lawyers Party' TV show that was restricted to euphemism types and functions used by men and women. From the analysis, 72 statements contained euphemistic expressions, 33 statements made by men, and 39 remarks made by women. They found 9 types of euphemisms in this show, they are metaphor, hyperbole, circumlocution, initialism, jargon, understatement, figurative expression, colloquial, and hypernym. The dominant type of euphemism found was jargon. Next, based on the functions of

euphemism, there were 5 functions of euphemisms; as a shield to avoid taboo and offence, as an uplifting tool, as doublespeak or politically correct expression, as a tool to define a group, and as a tool to entertain. The most frequent function of euphemism is euphemism used as doublespeak. Last, the differences in the way men and women use euphemisms are: women used euphemisms more frequently than men, 39 times uttered by women and 33 times by men; women used euphemisms to show their standing in society because politeness is expected from women; men used euphemism mainly to show firmness and displeasure in their speech.

Issah, Abubakari, Atintono, and Atibiri (2023) explore euphemisms as a taboo avoidance strategy in Mabia languages. They investigate the use of euphemisms in mitigating prohibited expressions in three Mabia languages: Dagbani, Frafra, and Kusaal. Their study shows that there are varied euphemistic expressions (indirection strategies) used to allude to sensitive topics such as sexual organs and intercourse, death, and snakes and snakebites. They indicated that the Mabia cultures share some similarities but also differ from one another in the conceptualization of these various topics and that the idiomatic expressions are grounded in the socio-cultural lives of a given speech community. Their analysis was based on the politeness theory and ethnography of communication theoretical framework where they demonstrate that the strategies are used to present a good self-image of interlocutors, which is important in the avoidance of face-threatening acts and the consideration of speech within the cultural context.

Tallulah (2019) examined taboo in language: the case of Kasem. Tallulah (2019, p. 155) observed that linguistic taboos associated with the supernatural are generally words or expressions deemed too holy or contemptuous to be mentioned without any reasonable

motive. They range from the words *Wɛ* ‘God’, *Tangbənə* ‘gods’, *Chuli* ‘totems’ in general, which often take the form of flowers like the baobab, kapok trees and sacred groves in particular, wildlife: leopard, lion, python and several other animals and objects in the environment such as mountains and last but not the least, *Chirə* ‘the departed’.

Tallulah (2019, p. 156) added that though it is not uncommon to mention the above-stated words or concepts in normal Kasem discourse, what is forbidden in Kasena contexts, in particular, is the invocation of these spiritual words in a ‘curse’ *solə*, ‘swear’ *dvuri* and ‘an oath’ *ni*, generally referred in Kasem as *n’ tɔŋ ni* ‘to take an oath’. Tomekyin and Nyame (2019) examine the role of euphemisms in Nzema language and culture. Their study investigates the role of euphemisms in the context of Nzema. It however discusses the Nzema examples alongside Akan, a sister language. It was observed that the Nzema speakers apply euphemisms to meet different communication purposes. Although some of these euphemistic expressions are utilized to mitigate a fear-based taboo like death, most euphemisms are used to avoid face threats but consider the facial wants of participants in a conversation where no fear of physical harm is involved but their commitment to politeness is the primary motivating factor for using them.

2.8. Theoretical framework

Politeness theory

This study is strengthened by politeness theory, a pragmatics theory proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987). The politeness theory was first developed in 1978 by Brown and Levinson. It was published in the journal ‘Questions and Politeness: Strategies in Social

Interaction' by Brown and Levinson (1978). Later on, in 1987, it was published as an independent book (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The goal of Brown and Levinson's approach was to pinpoint the universal social principles and how they influenced grammar restructuring. The objective was to achieve this by comprehending the rationale underlying the decisions made by speakers and listeners in their daily interactions. The central focus of their explanation of the speaker's language behaviour was on the notion of 'face' and 'rationality', asserting the universality of these two concepts. According to their assumption, the most typical motivation for flouting one or more of Grice's maxims (1975) is to cultivate politeness. Their assumption is logical, especially when considering scenarios where adhering to these maxims results in unpleasant statements.

The theory they developed explained both cultural similarities and distinct variations in the use of polite language. The model was developed by analyzing the speech of a Model Person (MP), who is considered a proficient speaker with the attributes of both rationality and face, including both positive and negative faces. The speaker (S) and the hearer (H) are both considered model persons (MPs). Brown and Levinson (1987) examined speech using speech act theory where they treat utterances as acts that are used to convey certain meanings and carry out certain functions. In a model person (MP) rationality means something very specific, precise and which is available to the model person (MP). It is also a definite mode of reasoning from ends to means, but by face, it means something highly specific. Brown and Levinson (1987) model person have been endowed with particular wants which are mainly to be unimpeded and to be approved in certain respects. Additionally, they believed that some actions inherently threatened either the speaker (S) or hearer (H) faces. Such acts are known as face-threatening acts (FTAs).

Brown and Levinson (1987) made a very strong connection between indirectness and politeness. They argued that a higher degree of indirectness shows more politeness. This is to say that the more the speaker risks loss of face in performing an act such as making a request or an apology, the more indirect strategy he or she adopts to be polite. In their model, politeness means to minimize the threat of face loss incurred by performing the act, and indirectness is a strategy used to accomplish this goal.

2.8.1. The notion of face

The notion of “face” is a complex culturally significant concept that revolves around one’s social identity, reputation, and dignity within a community or society. It’s deeply embedded in various cultures and can vary significantly across different societies and contexts. The term “face” was originally used in scholarly writing by Goffman (1955, 1967). According to Goffman (1955, p. 23), face is “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact.” However, “face” did not become a prominent area of focus for scholars studying communication and social interaction until the highly influential work on civility by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987).

According to Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 61), “the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself” is what is meant by “face.” This includes the need for approval and appreciation (positive face) as well as the desire to be left alone (negative face). For example, in the Dagaaba daily interaction, the avoidance of words such as *yɔɔre* (penis) and *paare* (vagina) is a politeness strategy employed by interlocutors to save the face of

either the speaker or the hearer. This simply implies that the use of these words in their direct form does not present the speaker who will be polite and pleasant to their interlocutors. Euphemistic expressions are used to reduce the use of these vulgar and taboo words as well as to present oneself as being aware of the social expectations in their daily interactions.

There are two types of faces, according to Brown and Levinson (1987): positive faces and negative faces. The urge to project a positive, acceptable image to others or the desire to be liked, admired, and approved of is referred to as having a positive face. On the other hand, negative face describes the yearning to be free from obligation in one's acts or the desire to be unhindered, forced upon, and invaded. Huang (2008, p. 96) postulates that the concept of face pertains to an individual's self-esteem and the degree of respect they have for themselves, whether in public or private settings. A face is a representation of oneself that is defined by socially acceptable features. Agyekum (2004) goes on to say that although this type of expression (face) is universal, it is used in connotations that are distinctive to certain cultures. As a result, when people communicate with one another, they have to make an effort to keep their status intact while they find extremely acceptable ways to express themselves in a way that will come off as less severe.

The 'face' is considered important in our daily interaction; it is therefore expected of us to be cognizant of the social context and consideration of our diction, the purpose of which the employment of euphemistic expressions becomes instrumental in our discourse. The use of vulgar or prohibited words such as those of the sex organs of humans, sexual intercourse, death, and menstruation is seen as language conduct that has a possibility of offering one in a negative light in discourse and is regarded as a "face-threatening act"

(FTA). Interlocutors aim to avoid actions that may pose a threat to themselves or their listeners. This enables individuals in interaction to keep a positive face.

Face-threatening act (FTA) is a politeness approach that involves threatening someone with unpleasant and negative words or acts. Politeness strategies promote respect for others and oneself, preserving self-image. Yule (1996) opines that face-threatening act is an act, which challenges the face wants of an interlocutor. This face-threatening could be caused by the speaker or the interlocutor. Brown and Levinson (1978) proposed four main types of politeness strategy to mitigate these face-threatening acts (FTAs), namely bald on-record strategy, positive politeness strategy, negative politeness strategy, and off-record strategy.

Bald on record strategy is simply not using any mitigating politeness strategies, is the most direct and least polite since it does not attempt to minimize the threat to the hearer's face. Goody, (1978, p. 96) postulates that this strategy is mostly applied by speakers who closely know the hearer. Direct imperative is a clear example of bald on record usage as exemplified in the sentence; *don't burn your hand!* The sentence indicates how the speaker badly and directly warns the hearer in order not to burn his or her hand. By saying it directly, it has the maximum efficiency to make the listener get the message of the utterance quickly to prevent him or her from burning his or her hand. Positive politeness strategy is the second politeness strategy proposed by Brown and Levinson (1978) which concerns addressing the hearer's need to be valued as a member of a group. This strategy is where the speaker recognizes the hearer's desire to be connected with others. This is achieved by avoiding disagreement, showing equality and a feeling of belonging to the same group, and attending to the hearer's needs and wants. Negative politeness strategy is the third strategy which focuses on softening the actions that threaten the hearer's negative

face (Brown & Levinson, 1978). This strategy considers the speaker's need to be free from imposition by others, thus, it is more indirect and polite.

The fourth politeness strategy proposed by Brown and Levinson (1978) to mitigate the face-threatening act is the off-record strategy. This strategy aims to avoid unequivocal formulation of face-threatening acts through the use of hints. It is the most indirect and polite strategy. When a speaker resorts to off-record in his or her utterance, he or she intentionally leaves the meaning of his or her utterance up to the hearer. The hearer therefore decides how to interpret the meaning of the utterance (Brown & Levinson, 1978). The meaning interpretation is based on the context within which the utterance was made. For example; after John has done a stupid thing, he is addressed as; *John is a real genius*. In this situation, the speaker is being ironic by saying the opposite of what he or she means. On this note, the speaker intentionally leaves the meaning of his or her utterance up to John to decide the meaning as to whether he is a genius or he is not. John therefore needs to consider what he did (situation or context) to deserve such praise from the speaker to enable him to know the actual meaning of the utterance.

In conclusion, numerous theories could have underpinned this study such as the Speech Act Theory, and the Relevance Theory. Although the Speech Act Theory by Austin and Searle (1968) deals with the actions performed via utterances, it is primarily focused on the performative aspect of language (e.g., requests, promises) rather than focusing on the social strategies involved in mitigating face threats. The Relevance Theory by Sperber and Wilson (1986) focuses on how speakers convey meaning effectively and efficiently. It is less concerned with the social functions of language use, such as maintaining face or social harmony. It does not fully address the reasons why speakers might choose to be indirect or

to be euphemistic to be specific to manage social relationships. The researcher chose the politeness theory over others because the politeness theory directly addresses how language is used to navigate social norms, manage face, and maintain politeness in communication. The politeness theory also provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the strategic use of euphemism in both everyday interactions and culturally specific contexts, therefore making it a strong theoretical choice for this study.

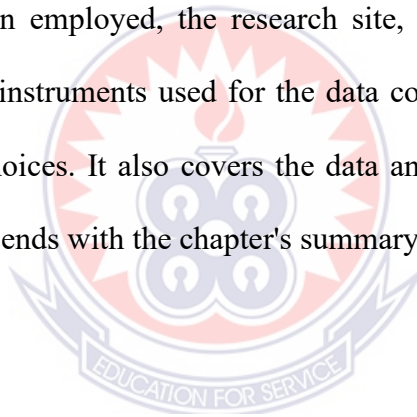


CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The researcher followed some specific procedures to ensure the reliability and validity of his data, which is the study's methodology. Owu-Ewie (2016, p.122) asserts that methodology is concern with the process and method used to gather data for the study as well as the analysis and presentation of the findings. This section, according to him is essential since it informs the reader of the credibility of the procedure used. This chapter covers the research design employed, the research site, the population, the sample and sampling procedures, the instruments used for the data collection, the source of data, and the motives behind the choices. It also covers the data analysis procedure employed, and ethical considerations and ends with the chapter's summary.



3.1 Research Design

The study is qualitative. It was chosen because of its descriptive quality, which helps the researcher better comprehend the meanings that motivate every human behaviour. The study used a qualitative approach which is ethnography comprising observations and interviews to gather in-depth verbal descriptions of traits, situations, and locations to comprehend euphemism as a strategy of indirection in communication among the Dagaaba. Owu-Ewie (2012) asserts that qualitative research involves deriving information from observation, interviews or verbal interactions and focuses on the meaning and interpretations of the participants. Kankam and Weiler (2010, p.65) postulate that the goal

of the qualitative research approach is to unearth complexity that aids in understanding meanings, due to the nature of the topic, which necessitates a full description of euphemism as a strategy of indirection in communication among the Dagaaba, the study used the descriptive approach as its primary study strategy. The focus of descriptive research, as Best and Khan (1998) postulate that is on the relationships or conditions that are currently in place. This includes identifying the types of practices, attitudes, beliefs, ongoing processes, and emerging trends. Additionally, Amedahe (2002) says that accurate and objective descriptions of people, things, processes, and activities are essential components of descriptive research. The purpose of descriptive research is to describe and document the phenomenon as it naturally occurs.

Qualitative research additionally aims to comprehend how individuals interpret a dynamic phenomenon since reality is subject to changes in people's perceptions. The reason why the researcher went with the qualitative method is that it yields "more in-depth" and thorough data. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) explained that a qualitative research design entails the collection of empirical data about a particular phenomenon through the use of a variety of instruments, including case studies, firsthand knowledge, interviews, observations, and visual texts.

Descriptive research efforts not only to describe a particular language or a set of languages but to explain why they should be the way they are. This method will allow the researcher to explain euphemism as a strategy of indirection in communication among the Dagaaba. This method was considered more suitable because of its explanatory strength through interviews and social casual interaction in natural settings. It was also considered because the data of this study was gathered in words and sentences. Owu-Ewie (2017) reiterates

that qualitative research is primarily exploratory research used to gain an understanding of the underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations of a phenomenon. In this study, we are considering euphemism as a phenomenon in the Dagaaba setting. An examination of the Dagaaba euphemism was made to bring to light, the opinions and motivations behind the use of such euphemisms.

3.2 Research Site

A research site is the actual location of the study where the researcher has decided to carry out the investigation; the researcher may or may not be a native of the research site. The research site is Jirapa Municipality in the Upper West Region of Ghana. Three communities were selected for this study. The communities are; Jirapa, Sigri, and Tizza. The rationale behind the selection of these three communities for the study is that;

1. The researcher is a native of Sigri, which informed its selection, for easy accessibility of participants.
2. Tizza is positioned in the municipal where a lot of cultural activities are carried out, that had an impact on my study. Also, easily accessible with good transportation links, making it convenient for regular visits and data collection.
3. Jirapa is also chosen because it is the municipal capital where a lot of traditional activities are carried out. Durbars are often held where chiefs, landowners (Tendaaba), and other community leaders are privileged to speak.

3.3 Population

Polit and Hungler (1996) posit that a population is the totality of cases that satisfy a predetermined set of requirements. Here, the population is always the whole collection of the items that the researcher is interested in. He continued by saying that due to several limitations, such as those related to time and money, it is challenging for researchers to examine the entire population. This leads to the selection or sampling of a subset of the population for the study, and the results are only generalized in cases where the sample accurately represents the whole population. With this, looking at the topic of study, the target population is competent and fluent speakers of Dagaare in Ghana and even beyond. Due to time constrain and cost the impossibility of studying the entire population. Hence, the researcher selected Jirapa Municipality in the Upper West Region of Ghana, where competent and fluent speakers were understudied in three communities (Sigri, Tizza, and Jirapa). The rationale behind selecting this Region is that the Upper West Region is the region or home of the Dagaaba. The researcher is from the municipality where this study is carried out.

3.4 Sample and sampling procedures

The sample is a small proportion of a population selected for observation and examination (Sidhu, 1984). By looking at the features of a sample, one might conclude the features of the population from which it is collected. By using sampling, a researcher can gain a representation of the entire target population while studying a comparatively small number of units instead of the entire population. The sample is resorted to reflect the population as a whole since it is impossible to cover the entire population. Sampling is the act, method,

or technique of choosing a representative portion of a population or one of an appropriate size to ascertain the parameters or characteristics of the entire population (Tuckman, 1999).

The sampling type adopted was a non-probability sampling technique where purposive sampling was most suitable and hence, was chosen. Cresswell, (2014) asserts that purposive sampling involves choosing participants because you believe that they might contribute something to your study. The researcher purposefully sampled his participants because he knew they had the requisite knowledge of the use of euphemism as a strategy of indirection in communication in various natural settings. Purposive sampling therefore will enable the researcher to answer his research questions and to meet his research objectives. With this in mind, the researcher purposely deals with three communities (Jirapa, Sigri, and Tizza) in the Jirapa municipality of the Upper West Region of Ghana. Twelve (12) fluent and competent Dagaare speakers, six (6) males and six (6) females were sampled from these three communities. Every community has four (4) participants, thus two (2) males, and two (2) females respectively. This distribution was done to avoid gender based discrimination.

3.5 Instruments used for Data collection

Data collection is one of the most crucial features in conducting a research work. The researcher therefore has to resort to certain tools or instruments to enable him or her to collect data. Data collection instruments are the tools that are chosen and used by the researcher in gathering his or her data. The current study is made up of two data collection instruments including observation and unstructured interview.

3.5.1 Observation

People employ the technique of observation in their natural environment to gain an understanding of social life from the viewpoint of the participant (Taylor, 2016). It is possible to think of observation as a method the researcher employs to record field notes on participant behaviour and activities at the study location. According to Adentwi (2005), observation is a data collection technique that uses visual perception as its primary source. He added that it calls for an observer to focus entirely on one group's behaviour for a predetermined amount of time in a natural environment.

To gain prior knowledge on euphemism as a strategy of verbal indirection in communication among the Dagaaba, the researcher started the data collection by observing situations in natural settings. The researcher while observing also records the ongoing interactions between the participants. There was the need for the researcher to employ an observation technique to give him some insights into what transpires between these participants in the natural environment. Again, the observation technique was used to provide the researcher with firsthand information.

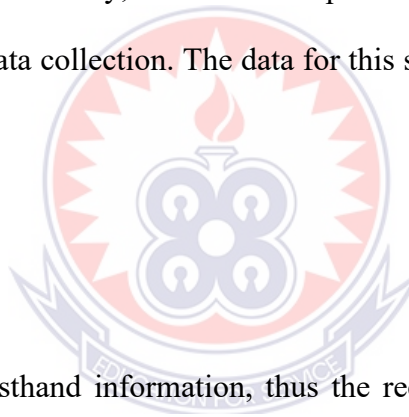
3.5.2 Unstructured interview

Patton, (2002) asserts that an unstructured interview is a type of interview which has no predetermined questions before the interview but questions emerge from the immediate context and are asked as the interview evolves.

The unstructured interview guide was employed to ask questions based on the outcome of the interactions between participants. This tool was also chosen because it gives the researcher more room to clarify responses, which enhances the study's data.

3.6 Sources of data

The researcher must take into account the where, when, and how of gathering the necessary data for the desired research to guarantee the authenticity of the study. This means that to obtain the data needed for the research, a variety of methods may be used. The process of obtaining information for the study, whether from primary, secondary, or both sources, is known as the sources of data collection. The data for this study was collected from primary sources.



3.6.1 Primary data

Primary data were the firsthand information, thus the recordings the researcher obtained from the interaction between participants in the natural setting. The recorded voices of the participants were transcribed and glossed in English by the researcher to be used as data for the study. The researcher had to listen keenly to the recorded voices to enable him to identify texts that contained euphemisms as a strategy of indirection in the interaction between participants. These euphemistic expressions identified as indirection strategy were transcribed into Dagaare and glossed in English. With the help of the researcher's native speaker's intuition and unstructured interview, the researcher received primary data from some participants he interviewed for clarifications on the meaning of some euphemistic expressions as a strategy of indirection in contexts. Primary data were collected from

natural contexts for this study. For instance, euphemistic expressions that emerged from the daily interactions such as; on the theme of death, sexuality, sex organs, menstruation, pregnancy, theft, excretion, and others were used as data for the study.

3.7 Data analysis procedure

The methods used to analyze the data are covered in this section. After the data were gathered and selected, they were analyzed. Data analysis is the process of arranging and categorizing data into a pattern category and doing a basic analysis to identify a theme and create working hypotheses based on the data. Creswell's (2014) Qualitative Research Data Analysis served as the foundation for the data processing and analysis method the researcher employed for this present investigation. The results were analyzed and discussed using the thematic data analysis technique, with a focus on connecting them to the study's empirical literature and underlying ideas. Marks and Yardley, (2004) state that any study that aims to uncover research findings through interpretations is best suited for this data analysis process. It gives the researcher a methodical approach to data analysis by assisting in the identification and demonstration of the connection between study data themes. Through the process of data analysis, researchers can compare and identify relationships between concepts.

I started by arranging and getting the data ready for examination. The information gathered via unstructured interviews and observations was translated and transcribed by the researcher. The information was first transcribed into Dagaare before being glossed in English. Next, using the study questions as a guide, I sorted and organized the data into several categories. I went over the data to make sense of the transcribed data after

organizing it. I considered the data, coded it, and categorized the themes that I had found. The research questions served as the foundation for the data categories. As a result, these topics served as the study's conclusions.

3.8 Ethical considerations

Ethical consideration in research refers to the principles and guidelines that help ensure the integrity, quality, and legitimacy of scientific studies. These considerations are essential for protecting the rights, dignity, and well-being of research participants, as well as for maintaining public trust in research practices. Every researcher must respect the rights to privacy, integrity, dignity, and confidentiality of the research participants. Before data collection, participants were given detailed information concerning the research work and they were notified that their participation was voluntary. The researcher obtained permission from these participants before getting the data. They were acquainted that the information they gave during data collection would be confidential and that the purpose of the study was purely academic. Hence, the purpose of the study was communicated to participants before the data were collected.

3.9 Summary

This chapter deals with the procedures employed in conducting the research. Looking at the research topic, qualitative research design was chosen because of its descriptive quality. Data was collected in three communities (Jirapa, Sigri, and Tizza) in the Jirapa municipality of the Upper West Region of Ghana as the research sites. Twelve (12)

participants were interviewed about the various interactions that occurred in the natural settings of the sampled population. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants for the study. Observations and unstructured interviews were used as data collection procedures. The data for this study was collected from primary sources. Data was transcribed, translated, and analyzed using Creswell's (2014) Qualitative Research Data Analysis, thus the thematic analysis procedure. Again, ethical issues were looked at in this chapter.



CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter is confined to the findings and discussion of euphemism as an indirection strategy in communication among the Dagaaba. As mentioned in Chapter Three, the study's data are euphemisms as a strategy of indirection found among the Dagaaba in their daily interactions. The analysis focuses on the various euphemistic expressions identified in the categorized themes such as; the theme of death, the theme of sexual intercourse and sex organs, the theme of menstruation, the theme of drunk/alcoholism, and the theme of pregnancy, and the contexts within which these euphemistic expressions are used among the Dagaaba. The study also identifies and analyses the functions of euphemism among the Dagaaba. These euphemisms help the Dagaaba in their daily conversation to save their faces. Moreover, it highlights the influence of modernization on the use of euphemisms among the Dagaaba. Thus, the impact modernization has on the use of euphemism in Dagaare. The politeness theory by Brown and Levinson (1987) which focuses on the concept of 'face' was used in the analysis of the data. Euphemism is a verbal strategy in communication in various cultures used as a face-saving technique. In other to be polite, interlocutors always adopt euphemistic expressions in their daily interactions. Euphemism is seen as avoidance of taboo, profane, vulgar, unpleasant, and disdained language. Among the Dagaaba, euphemism is seen as '*yellinni*' hidden language or hidden talks, thus the same as cover-up language, and gentle or good sayings. The euphemism '*yellinni*' is very common among the Dagaaba and every competent and fluent speaker of Dagaare cannot speak well without adopting euphemisms in his or her talks.

4.1 Euphemisms in contexts with the identified themes among the Dagaaba.

There have been several researches on euphemism over the years. However, it is sometimes difficult to comprehend such expressions because their appreciation is not clear due to the nature and context in which they are used. The researcher therefore considered some themes where euphemisms are often used among the Dagaaba in their daily interactions. This was to enable the researcher to be abreast with euphemisms among the Dagaaba. As a result, some themes identified in this study where euphemisms are often used as a strategy of indirection among the Dagaaba include; death, menstruation, pregnancy, sexual intercourse and sex organs, and drunk/alcoholism.

4.1.1 Euphemisms on the theme of death

Death is believed to be the third stage in the human life cycle among the Dagaaba and other cultures across the globe after conception and birth. According to Allan and Bridge (2006, p. 222), death is seen as “a fear-based taboo”. Where different fears exist such as the fear of losing loved people; fear of what happens to the body; fear of the very finality of death and fear of what follows the end of life. The Dagaaba see death (*kũũ*) as a transition from livelihood to the spiritual realms. The concept of death among the Dagaaba and other cultures is accompanied by sadness, fear, and discomfort and people are frightened upon hearing the death of their loved ones. As a result, the Dagaaba also uses euphemistic expressions as a strategy of indirection to avoid talking about it openly. The Dagaaba has various death euphemistic expressions, which are usually attributed based on the status, occupation, and age of the deceased. In the direct language, the expressions for "die", "dead", and "death" are "*kpi*", "*kpie*", and "*kũũ*" respectively. In the context of death, the

Dagaaba refers to the dead body as '*kũũ*'. However, these direct expressions are considered inappropriate and unsuitable in most social contexts among the Dagaaba and as a result, call for several euphemistic expressions as a strategy of indirection in a discussion about death. This section shows how the Dagaaba uses euphemism as a strategy of indirection to express the death of a chief, the death of an ordinary adult, and the death of a child in their daily interactions.

4.1.1.1 Euphemistic expressions for the death of a chief among the Dagaaba.

The Dagaaba conceptualize the death of a chief with profound reverence integrating spiritual, social, and cultural basics. The death of a chief is not just the passing of an individual but a significant event with implications for the entire community. Chiefs are considered the custodians of tradition, authority, and the link between the living, the ancestors, and the spiritual world. Their death is seen as both a transition and a disruption, which must be managed carefully through rituals and ceremonies. Below are some key aspects of how the Dagaaba express the death of a chief.

Data 1

This conversation happens between two elders under a tree where they sit to drink pito. In their life, the Dagaaba believed that the community's most hidden secrets are talked about in drinking spots. The men are usually seen at these pito spots/bases drinking and talking.

Elder 1: *A teŋe nan yaan dɔɔnɔ fo meŋ won a la?*

'The way the community is shaking, have you also heard'?

Elder 2: *Ka fõð ba yeli ko ma zaa, beri ama poɔɔ n nimiri zaa la tole ne n weɛ toma ka n pãã lee*

sããna a kpeɛɛ n meɲɛ teɲɛɲ.

'Unless you tell me, these days my eye is hot with my farm work and I'm now a stranger

in my community.

Elder 1: *Ba ye hunohuno la ka a naa danɣbale kɔɔɛ la.*

'Rumor has it that the chief's walking staff is broken.'

Elder 2: *Pa! N ba ban ka baa ɔɔɔɔ yɔɔɔ. A teɲɛ sereɲ dɔɔɛ la.*

'Pa! I don't know that dog eats pumpkin. The community has shaken.'

Analysis:

In this dialogue, a euphemistic expression is used to announce the death of the chief. In the second utterance of Elder 1: *Ba ye hunohuno la ka a naa danɣbale kɔɔɛ la*. 'Rumor has it that the chief's walking staff is broken', is where this euphemistic expression is identified; thus, *a naa danɣbale kɔɔɛ la*, 'the chief's walking staff has broken.'

Among the Dagaaba, chiefs are considered to be of high social status. It is also believed that the strength of the chief is his walking staff because the staff symbolizes power or strength and support among the Dagaaba. Chiefs are identified and recognized with their walking staff wherever they are among the Dagaaba. This means that if the walking staff is broken the chief is powerless, and hence does not exist. It is believed that the death of the

chief is hidden from the community members until certain consultations from divinities by the elders are met after which the announcement is then made formally. In the event of the death of the chief among the Dagaaba, this expression is one of the keys used by participants in the conversation to code his departure.

Applying Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, it is very obvious that Elder 1 tries to maintain the positive face of Elder 2 by starting the conversation with a question to enable him to create the indulgence of Elder 2 on the happenings of the community. In the first utterance of Elder 1, *A teɛ naŋ yaan dɔɔnɔ fo meŋ woŋ a la?* 'The way the community is shaking, have you also heard'? It is a questioning technique adopted to know whether Elder 2 is privileged to the information he wants to share or not, and also to prepare Elder 2 mind and heart for the message. However, Elder 2 was not privileged to the information therefore Elder 1 resorted to euphemistic expression, thus; *a naa danɣbale kɔɔe la*, 'the chief's walking staff is broken.' to inform Elder 2 about the death of their chief to lessen the shock, and fear in him.

Data 2

A messenger rode his bicycle and arrived at a residence where women, men, and children were seated in the front yard. He was warmly welcomed, and he was provided with a seat and water to quench his thirst. They exchanged greetings after drinking the water. He happens to be a messenger from Jirapa to announce the death of the Jirapa chief.

Man: *N ba te naŋ pãã zeŋe ka fo wa poɔ, maaron la?*

'Is it peace, my friend as we sat and you joined?'

Messenger: *Tɔɔ maaronɔ la, kyɛ posãã duoro la ka n nemberɛ tonɛ ma ka N wa ko a yidaandɔɔ.*

'It is peace anyway, but I have sad news from my elders to the landlord.'

Woman: *(Boɔle bidɔɔlee a tonɛ o ka o kpɛ boɔle o sããkoma).*

(Call a boy and send him inside to call his grandfather).

Landlord: (Came out and exchanged greetings with the messenger and asked).

Maaronɔ la ka te nyɛrɛ fo te yiri poɔ? 'Is it peaceful to see you in our home?'

Messenger: *A n nemberɛ la ba ganɛ a pãã yeli ka N wa ko fo a duoro.*

'My elders do not have sleep, therefore, they sent me to inform you'.

Landlord: *N bidɔɔ, an la ba kyebe a Gyerebaa naa yiri poɔ?*

'Who is no more in the Jirapa chief palace, my son?'

Messenger: *A nemberɛ yeli ka n yeli ko fo ka a Gyerebaa naa wiri bɔrɛ la.*

'The elders said I should inform you that the Jirapa chief horse is missing.'

Man: *A teɛ sãã la.*

'The town is spoiled.'

Analysis:

In the conversation above, it is very obvious that the messenger from Jirapa did not present his message in plain words. When one of the men in the front yard first asked the

messenger the reason for his visit, his answer kept them in suspense till the presence of the landlord. The first euphemistic expression identified here is in the second utterance of the messenger; *A n nemberɛ la ba gaɲɛ*. 'My elders do not have sleep'. This expression is a way of announcing a funeral among the Dagaaba. Though the statement does not announce the death of the chief, it informs the listeners of the sad news that they are about to receive on the demise of a loved one and hence, prepares the mind of the listeners to know the actual person that is dead. It shows good communication and the competence level of the messenger in the language. The messenger finally announces the death of the chief in his third utterance when the landlord persists with a follow-up question; Landlord: *N bidɔɔ, aɲ la ba kyebe a Gyerebaa naa yiri poɔ?* 'Who is no more in the Jirapa chief palace, my son?' A euphemism is employed by the landlord in his request to know who died. This suggests that the landlord comprehends the message very well in this context. Then he answered; Messenger: *A nemberɛ yeli ka n yeli ko fo ka a Gyerebaa naa wiri bɔrɛɛ la*. 'The elders said I should inform you that the Jirapa chief horse is missing.' The euphemistic expression identified is '*a Gyerebaa naa wiri bɔrɛɛ la*' thus 'the Jirapa chief horse is missing'. This euphemistic expression means that the Jirapa chief is dead.

The horse symbolizes royalty among the Dagaaba and the chiefs are usually in possession of these horses. Horses used to be the means of transport/movements of the chiefs among the Dagaaba and they were valued and prestigious. This means that the chiefs were usually seen on their horses within and outside the communities among the Dagaaba. The missing horse of the chief depicts the death of the chief among the Dagaaba because it explains the inability of the chief to move or to be seen within or outside the community. In the context of politeness theory, such euphemistic expressions are necessary for managing the

discourse and ensuring that the faces of interlocutors are not threatened. Using this euphemistic expression eases the negative effect of directly announcing the death of the chief on interlocutors.

Data 3

A man returned from Jirapa and wants to quench his thirst at the usual place where pito is sold at the community centre before reaching home. He asked for a pot of pito before exchanging greetings.

Man: Naŋ de dogelee wa kyiri eŋ ma ka n mãã n kɔnnɔyuri.

'Kindly pour a pot for me to quench my thirst'.

Woman: (Poured a pot of pito to the man after which they greeted).

Man: *Hm, N gaa ka n nye te are-baala na a Gyerebaa poɔ a te woŋ duori saama ka a teŋe tekpoŋ lee la.*

'I went to see our sick uncle in Jirapa and heard the bad news that the big tree of the town has fallen.

Woman: (Clap hands and hold her waist in surprise).

Analysis:

The conversation between the man and woman (pito seller) presented above shows that they are relatives and the woman is aware of their uncle who is sick and based in Jirapa.

The euphemistic expression employed in the above interaction is spotted in the second utterance of the man; thus, 'a teɲe tekpon lee la', 'the big tree of the town has fallen'. This is a euphemistic expression that is resorted to announcing the death of the chief of Jirapa to the woman (pito seller). However, the situation in which this statement was delivered does not only demonstrate linguistic competence but also communicative competence in the language on the part of the interlocutors; the woman comprehends the message as the man indirectly announces the death of the chief to her.

The big tree symbolizes leadership, strength, stability, protection, and a canopy providing shelter for the community. A chief or a highly respected elder in traditional societies is often regarded as a protector and central figure that provides guidance, support, and wisdom to the community similar to how a big tree provides shade and shelter in nature. When such a significant figure passes away, their absence is felt deeply, like the emptiness or loss of a large, vital tree falling. The tree represents the chief's towering presence and his pivotal role in the well-being and unity of the people. In essence, "The Big Tree Has Fallen" employs both positive and negative politeness by honouring respect for the deceased and by reducing the emotional imposition of openly announcing the death. It preserves both the dignity of the dead and the emotional sensitivity of the listener. In addition, other euphemistic expressions that are very common and refer to the death of a chief among the Dagaaba include;

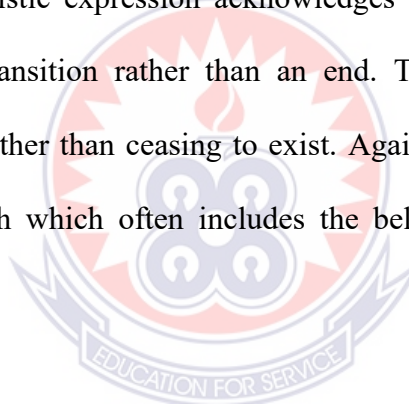
Data 4

(a) *a naa eele ba la teɲe* “the chief’s horn has fixed on the ground”

In the Dagaaba discourse, the euphemistic statement “the chief’s horn has fixed on the ground” may be used to indicate to the death of a chief or the chief’s severe condition. The horn represents authority, strength and wealth in the Dagaaba cosmology. The fixed horn implies a disruption on the community’s state. When one says “the chief’s horn has fixed on the ground,” it means the chief is death, hence his inability to perform.

(b) *a naa tue sori* “the chief has travelled”

Euphemisms like “the chief has travelled” are employed in a conversation to avoid the direct mention of death, which is perceived as painful or harsh, especially for a figure of high status. This euphemistic expression acknowledges the importance of the chief and frames his death as a transition rather than an end. This suggests that the chief has embarked on a journey rather than ceasing to exist. Again, the statement also reflects the Dagaaba concept of death which often includes the belief in an afterlife or a spiritual continuation.



4.1.1.2 Euphemistic expressions for the death of an ordinary adult among the Dagaaba.

Death is treated with respect, and the deceased is honoured through rituals and ceremonies to ensure their peaceful passage to the afterlife.

Data 5

Mr X, a neighbour, has noticed that his friend has not returned from the hospital after his last visit for several days. He went to the friend's house to find out what was happening.

Mr X: *N bidɔɔ, N ba la nye bee a woŋ n zɔ na yeɛ zaa. Ba naŋ ba bare o be?*

My son, I haven't seen or heard about my friend. Has he not been discharged?

Son: (with tears in his eyes), *hm, pampana ka n ma deɛ boɔle yeli ka a o baaloŋ sããe la.*

Hmm, I just received a call from my mother informing me that his sickness has spoiled.

Mr X: *Aa, Zaboraa ŋmaa la o yon yiri, n zɔ la la aŋ Zaboraa?*

Aa, Zaboraa (a common way the two friends used to address each other) has built his own

house, who is now my friend Zaboraa?

Analysis:

The utterance, *o baaloŋ sããe la*, “his sickness has spoiled” employed by the son and ‘*ŋmaa la o yon yiri*’ “built his own house” by Mr. X are considered euphemisms for death. Sickness is something abnormal to the human body which does not make an individual feel comfortable when affected. People fall sick and recover from the sickness and others die through sickness. The inability or failure to recover from one's sickness depends on the type and severity of the sickness. The damage caused by sickness in this context is death and when this happens the Dagaaba resort to this euphemistic expression, *o baaloŋ sããe la*

“his sickness has spoiled” to announce his or her death. On the other hand, *ɲmaa la o yon yiri* “built his own house” is a euphemistic expression for death in the sense that the person who died can no longer be visited in his or her house. The house here refers to the grave, and the grave is for only the death. Employing these expressions reduces the negative effects of directly mentioning death in the Dagaaba culture and that also marks good communicative competence hence ensuring that the faces of participants in conversation are not threatened.

Data 6

Two elderly women were discussing the death of a well-respected community member, Mr Y, who had been ill for some time.

Woman A: *Fo won la a duoro kyaare Mba Y yeŋe?*

Have you heard the news about Mr Y?

Woman B: *Ōō, N won a la. O kulee. Ka o gaa la o kpenne zie zaamee. Te kɔŋ la gandaa.*

Yes, I heard. He’s gone home. He joined his ancestors yesterday. We lost a great man.

Woman A: *Te sereŋ kɔŋ la gandaa. Bibiiri zaa sãākoma da la. A dɔɔ da sereŋ nɔŋ la noba ne o*

sikiri zaa.

We lost a great man. He was a grandfather to the entire children. This man

loved people with all his heart.

Analysis:

About the above interaction between these elderly women, it is clear that both have heard the news concerning the death of Mr Y, a respected member of the community. The statements *o kulee* “he’s gone home” and *gaa la o kpenne zie*, “joined his ancestors” were employed by woman B to talk about the death of the well-respected man in the community implicitly. The Dagaaba and other Mabilia cultures conceptualized death as “gone home” because it is believed that this world is not our permanent home and that everyone will surely depart from the planet Earth one day by dying. The Dagaaba also believed that human beings are strangers and travellers in this world. The world is a marketplace and when one is done buying and selling will have to return home.

When a well-respected person dies, thus a person who is considered to have lived a good life, a person with dignity, and has an impact on the lives of others in society among the Dagaaba, the euphemistic expression, *o gaa la o kpenne zie*, “s/he has joined his ancestors” is used to express his death. Such people are considered the immediate ancestors and their names are mentioned and water is given to them to be given to the older ancestors during libation performance. In the context of death, “joined his ancestors” and “gone home” is used as a way of showing respect to the deceased and also a mild way of announcing the death of a person to lessen the tension and shock that would have been experienced by explicitly expressing death.

Data 7

Mr Z died at Galamsey after leaving home for several months. His friends were bringing the body home and sending a message for the family to be pre-informed before their arrival.

Messenger: *Fo ηmenaa, n saa. N ban ka Dmene kpẽd zuiη ye waa maaroη.*

Good afternoon father. I hope you are doing well by God's grace.

Z Father: *Dmenaa taaε, n bidɔɔ. Te zaa kyagele. Yelizaa gere soη fo zie?*

Good afternoon, my son. We are all doing well. How is everything with you?

Messenger: *N saa, yelmeηε, N taa la duoro wane. Fo ban ka te nyɔvoε poɔ yeε ba maη tasoga kyεε le te naη nare, ka a seη ka te zaa maη sage de le Dmene naη segere biη ko te.*

Father, indeed, I bring you news. You know life takes unexpected turns, and we must all accept what God has planned for us.

Z Father: *Õd, n bidɔɔ. Te ban la le. Boη la? Yelizaa gere soη?*

Yes, my son. We understand that. What is it? Is everything well?

Messenger: *N saa, fo bidɔɔ tue sori kyuuri mine naη pare, ka o te ηme omeηε zie na zaa o naη da be. Kyε fo nyεε la, tasoga kaηa, Dmene maη boole la o bone ka o wa penne o toma poɔ.*

Father, your son, embarked on his journey a few months ago, and he worked hard wherever he was. But you see, sometimes God calls his own to rest from their labour.

Z Father: *Boole o bone? Bon ka fo yele?*

Calls his own? What are you saying?

Messenger: *N saa, sɔroo la nyɔge fomenɛ. Bon N nan yele la a fo bidɔ gaa la o pennoo zie. O zagere la saabo a o toma poɔ. Ba yeli ka N en ye duoro ka ba taa la a enɛ wane ne.*

Father, please be strong. What I'm trying to say is that your son has gone to a place of rest. He refused TZ in his labour. They said I should inform you that they are on their way with the body.

Z Father: *Bareka, n bidɔ, ane a duoro. Te nare la a tuori de o. te ba taa a faɲa. Ka e seɲ le a daana nan boɔrɔ.*

Thank you, my son, for informing us. We do not have a say. May God's will be done.

Analysis:

The messenger in the above conversation did not just present the sad news to Mr Z's father explicitly. He considers the face of the old man knowing how shocking and bad the news was going to be for him. It takes a competent speaker to break such news without hurting the face of the listener. Though it was very hard to announce the death of Mr Z to his father, the messenger employed indirection strategies by wining around the idea of death. For instance, consider this statement by the messenger; *but you see, sometimes God calls his own to rest from their labour*. Mr Z's father, a competent speaker comprehends the message and knows that all was not well. When the messenger realises that Mr Z's father comprehends the message, he finally announces the death of his son to him with these

euphemistic expressions, *a fo bidɔɔ gaa la o pennoo zie*, “your son has gone to a place of rest,” and *O zagere la saabo* “he refused TZ”.

Dagaaba sees death as a peaceful rest after the hard labour on earth. They believed that people go through suffering and pain in an endeavour to survive on earth, especially when one is sick. Death is an antidote to suffering and pain, and the dead are considered to have been relieved from such chimaeras. Again, among many cultures including the Dagaaba, no dead body eats, though the spirit of the dead comes to the house to eat in the Dagaaba culture. Therefore the idea of not being able to eat is associated with death in the sense that when someone is dead it implies that the person cannot perform any action by eating. As to whether the person is satisfied or not, the inability to eat is considered the refusal of TZ (food) in the context of death among the Dagaaba.

Furthermore, other expressions are used to refer to the death of ordinary adults among the Dagaaba, as shown below:

Data 8

(a) <i>O bare te la</i>	“s/he left us”
(b) <i>O kɔŋɛɛ o nyɔvore</i>	“s/he lost his life”
(c) <i>O gaaɛ bɛrɛ poɔ</i>	“s/he went to the elderly”
(d) <i>O barɛɛ donɛɛ</i>	“s/he left the world”
(e) <i>O lɛɛ ɔmɛne toɔre</i>	“s/he become God’s own”
(f) <i>O kyebe</i>	“s/he is not there or is no more”
(g) <i>O gaŋɛɛ ba iri</i>	“s/he slept and did not wake up”

- (h) *Ɔmene boɔɔ ta o la* “God’s call has reached him/her”
- (i) *O yɛɛ baaree la* “his/her matter has ended/finished”
- (j) *O gaare tembie kyeɛbo* “s/he went to dig termites”

All these euphemistic expressions are used in discussing the death of an ordinary person among the Dagaaba, and they conform to the traditions and cultural norms within the social interaction of the people.

4.1.1.3 Euphemistic expressions for the death of a child among the Dagaaba.

In the Dagaaba culture, death, particularly the death of a child, is often surrounded by a deep sense of sorrow, but it is also viewed within a broader cultural and spiritual context. The death of a child is often interpreted as an interruption in the expected cycle of life since children represent the future and continuity of the family and the community. In this case, the death of a child is viewed as bad luck or even ancestral displeasure. Traditional beliefs might cause the family to seek out spiritual or divinatory explanations, such as whether there was a curse, witchcraft, or failure to appease the ancestors.

However, among the Dagaaba, such deaths are sometimes linked to spiritual causes, with the belief that certain children may be, *bi-wolle*, “spirit children.” These children are thought to have returned from the spirit world and were never meant to live long in the physical world. Their deaths are sometimes viewed as inevitable, even expected. In these cases, the death of a child is not seen as tragic in the same way as it might otherwise be. Instead, it is viewed as part of the spiritual cycle, where the child is returning to their true

state. While the family may mourn, they also understand that the *bi-wolaa*, “spirit child” return to the spirit world is part of a predetermined destiny, rather than an unexpected misfortune.

As a way of conceptualizing and coping with child mortality, the Dagaaba culture often uses euphemisms as indirect language. Rather than speaking about the death of a child in direct terms, expressions that minimize the harshness of the event are preferred. This allows the community to communicate grief without invoking taboos or intensifying the pain associated with loss.

Below are some key expressions of how the Dagaaba viewed the death of a child.

Data 9

This conversation was between a woman who lost her child and her friend. She explains her predicament to her friend, her pain and loss.

Woman: (*mourning*)

Friend: (*consoling her*) *Hm, taa kannyiri. Dmene yel-erre la.*

Hm, take heart. It is the doing of the lord.

Woman: *Boŋ ka te ba e? Te mɔ la te moɔbo zaa kye ka o leɛ o puori ko te.*

What didn't we do? We tried all that we could yet he turned his back on us.

Analysis:

It is obvious in this situation that despite giving their best effort, the child still chose to turn away from them. The phrase "What didn't we do?" implies that they exhausted all possible options in trying to save or protect their child from dying, yet it wasn't enough to give him life. In this context, "*turned his back on us*" is being used as a euphemistic expression to refer to the death of a child. The phrase conveys a deep sense of loss and abandonment. The family or parents feel abandoned by the child's passing, although it was not a choice the child made.

Children are the pride of every family, and they are expected to be obedient and respectful to elders. It is very strange and unexpected among the Dagaaba for a child to turn his back on elders in conversation because that connotes a refusal, disrespect, and a deliberate act of abandonment. The death of a child is considered premature, abnormal, strange, and unexpected therefore the expression "*turned his back on us*" is employed to implicitly speak about the death of a child. Through the lens of politeness theory, the expression "*turned his back on us*" is a complex way of managing both positive and negative faces in the context of death and grief. The indirect utterance "*turned his back on us*" softens the blow of death, protecting the family from further emotional distress and managing the uncomfortable reality for both the speaker and the listener.

Data 10

Two women met at the market square and discussed the death of their friend's child, who just gave birth a few months ago.

Woman A: *N woŋ la o woore zaamee. Yelmeŋe zaa a kyere la sikiri.*

I heard about her situation yesterday. It's truly heartbreaking.

Woman B: *Õõ, a eee tuo. O bombile dee pɔreɛ o zie wieoũ le.*

Yes, it's hard. Her little one was plugged from her so soon.

Woman A: *N koŋ baŋ teere boŋ na entole na poɔ onan na be.*

I can't imagine the pain she is going through.

Analysis:

The expression, *pɔreɛ*, "plugged from" in the Dagaaba context is used to refer to the death of a child as being "plugged from the mother." The phrase "plugged from" represents the child as a part of the mother, much like a plant or fruit is attached to its source. When a child dies, the bond between mother and child is imagined as being detached or "plugged" away, similar to a fruit being removed or detached from its tree. This statement portrays the child's death as an inevitable, natural act as if guided by forces beyond human control. Again, the act of "plugging" suggests that the child was taken from the mother by an external, possibly divine force. It acknowledges the cultural beliefs that death, especially of a young one, might be beyond human comprehension, driven by spiritual reasons rather than just a physical occurrence.

Using "plugged from" as a euphemism aligns with the politeness theory by Brown and Levinson (1987). By opting for the euphemism, the speaker respects the listener's emotional boundaries, acknowledging their vulnerability in the face of such news. This

reduces the psychological burden on both parties and enables them to approach the sensitive topic with a degree of emotional detachment.

Data 11

A woman in labour was rushed to a hospital in the absence of her husband. Unfortunately, the baby did not survive the delivery. This is how the message was presented to the husband when he returned from the farm.

Husband: *Pampana ka n deɛ yi weɛ wa woŋ ka fo de la a yidaampɔge gaa ne asibiti, o dɔgɛɛ la?*

I just returned from the farm now and heard that you have sent the landlady to the hospital, has she delivered?

Man: *Zunoɔ kyebe, o dɔgɛɛ la kyɛ o ba de.*

Unfortunately, she could not pick up after delivery.

Analysis:

The utterance, *o dɔgɛɛ la kyɛ o ba de*, “she could not pick after delivery” suggests that the child was born but was unable to continue the journey of life. In many cultures including the Dagaaba, life is symbolically seen as a path or task, and ‘picking’ may metaphorically refer to the child’s ability to take up to life. The inability of the child to grasp or hold onto life shows the impossibility of the mother picking it. The expression avoids triggering the immediate pain or shock that a straight statement like “the child died” might cause to both parties, thereby serving as a politeness strategy.

Other euphemistic expressions associated with the death of a child among the Dagaaba are shown beneath.

Data 12

(a) O bɔrɛɛ la	“s/he is missing”
(b) O fããɛ la	“s/he escape/slip off”
(c) O yeli ka o koŋ zeŋe kye	“s/he said he will not sit here”
(d) O yeli ka o ba boɔrɔ te	“s/he said he doesn’t want us”
(e) O zagere te la	“s/he refuse or abandon us”
(f) O ŋmɛɛ o ma	“s/he has beaten the mother”
(g) O dɔge sããɛ la	“she spoiled the delivery”
(h) O ba e te bone	“s/he is not our own or thing”

When a child dies during or immediately after delivery, expression (g) is often employed to announce the child's death. Also, expression (a), (c), (d), and (e) are used to refer to the death of a grown child. Again, expression (b), (f), and (h) are also used for a child after some days and month of birth. By using all these indirect expressions, the speaker can navigate the difficult subject of death with care, passion, and respect, while allowing the listener to process the information in a more palatable way.

4.1.2 Euphemisms on the theme of sexual intercourse

The Dagaaba, like many other cultures, have traditional views on sexual intercourse that are shaped by their cultural and moral values. Sexual activity is seen as an essential part of life, particularly for procreation and the continuity of the family lineage. Among the

Dagaaba, sex is directly referred to as "*nyɔɔ/ nyɔɔbo*", which is viewed as vulgar, profane, unpleasant, and inappropriate in social interactions. Participants who refer to sexual intimacy explicitly in conversations are usually seen to be uncultured and have low morals. However, euphemisms as an indirect strategy are commonly used in discussions about sex, showing respect for social norms on decency and privacy. Public discussions of sexual matters, especially in traditional settings, are often avoided or carefully put to avoid being perceived as inappropriate.

Beneath presents how the Dagaaba employ euphemisms as an indirect strategy to express sexual intercourse;

Data 13

A man was accused of impregnating a girl. He was summoned and interrogated.

Elder: *Te boɔɔ ka te baŋ a yelmeŋe. A pɔgelee yeli ka fɔɔ la eŋ o a pɔɔ, yelmeŋe la?*

We want to know the truth. The girl said it's you that made her pregnant; is that true?

Man: *A ba e yelmeŋe bonso te daŋ ba laŋe seŋe.*

It is not true because we never shared a bed.

Analysis:

In this conversation, the euphemism *laŋe seŋe* "shared bed" is used by the man to indirectly refer to sexual intercourse. The elder is trying to confirm whether the man had intimate relations with the girl, which would explain her pregnancy. The man, in his response, denies ever "sharing a bed" with the girl, effectively rejecting the claim that they had

sexual intercourse. In this context “sharing a bed” goes beyond a man and a woman sleeping together on the same bed. It acknowledged the act performed in bed by a man and a woman, thus sexual intercourse.

This conversation demonstrates how euphemisms as an indirect strategy like "sharing a bed" serve to discuss private, intimate matters in a socially acceptable way. The expression permits the accused to address a serious issue, such as paternity, without violating cultural taboos. In the lens of politeness theory, the expression enables the man to talk about difficult and private topics without being embarrassed, thereby saving his face and that of the listeners.

Data 14

Two friends, Mr X and Mr Y, are having a casual conversation about relationships. Mr X is curious about whether Mr Y has any experience with women.

Mr X: *Fo bie na yeŋe waa kpeɛŋaa be?*

Is your girl so difficult?

Mr Y: *O da kpeɛŋaa a piiluu saŋa, kyɛ te naŋ baŋe taa, o mää̃e la.*

She was difficult in the beginning, but now that we know each other, she is cool.

Analysis:

Before engaging in sexual intercourse, the opposite sex may strip and in the process may see each other's sex organs. Again, the consent of both parties must be obtained. The

euphemistic expression *baye taa* “know each other” refers to sexual intercourse. The expression emphasizes a shared experience, suggesting that sexual intercourse is an act of mutual understanding and connection between two individuals. This implies that both parties are actively involved in deepening their relationship. "Knowing each other" implies more than a physical encounter; it hints at an emotional connection or personal understanding. Speakers avoid direct reference to sex, which could be seen as impolite or inappropriate by resorting to the expression “know each other”

Data 15

This conversation happened between a mother and her daughter who sneaked out last night to her boyfriend.

Mother: *Yeŋ ka fo yi waana?*

Where are you coming from?

Daughter: (murmuring)

Mother: *Ka fõõ wa teere ka a ye gana ne dɔbɔ e la toma, fo daŋ na koŋ la dabanɔkale.*

If you think sleeping with men all around is work, you will cry had I know.

Analysis:

To “sleep with” especially the opposite sex is conceptualized as having sexual intercourse with that person among the Dagaaba. The phrase "sleeping with men" suggests the act of sharing a bed with men, which can refer to sleeping. However, it is a euphemism which

doesn't imply sleep in this context. In the conversation between the mother and daughter, the euphemism allows the mother to express her disapproval of the daughter's behaviour without using explicit or crude terms for sexual intercourse. In many cultures, plain reference to sexual activities is often regarded as inappropriate or unacceptable, especially in conversations between parents and children. The mother employed this euphemistic expression to avoid embarrassment to save the face of her daughter in the conversation while still addressing the issue.

Other euphemistic expressions associated with sexual intercourse among the Dagaaba are shown below.

Data 16

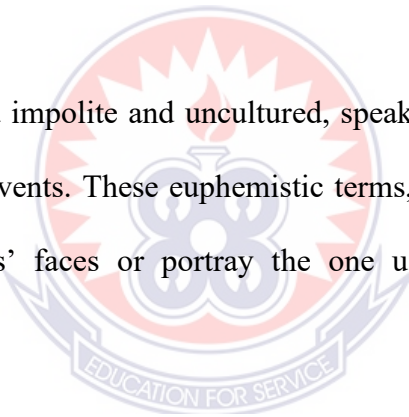
- 
- | | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| (a) <i>N bɔ o la</i> | “I loved her” |
| (b) <i>Ba laɲe la taa</i> | “they got together” |
| (c) <i>N nu kpɛ o la</i> | “My hand entered her” |
| (d) <i>N bare o la</i> | “I finished her” |
| (e) <i>N di o la / N ɔ o la</i> | “I eat her/I chop her” |
| (f) <i>N vaɛ bone eɲ o</i> | “I canned a thing inside her” |
| (g) <i>Te eɛɛ lɛ</i> | “We did it” |
| (h) <i>N kpɛɛ o poɔ</i> | “I entered her inside” |
| (i) <i>O do o la</i> | “he has climbed her” |
| (j) <i>A ɲme laga</i> | “to beat pubic” |
| (k) <i>A tɔ maaronɔ</i> | “to touched cold” |
| (l) <i>A daa bone eɲ o / a logere eɲ</i> | “to push a thing in her” |

(m) *N daa/marefa koŋee o zu* “my stick/ gun has sounded on her”

4.1.2.1 Euphemistic expressions for sex organs in Dagaare

The sex organs are also taboo and unmentionable in the Dagaaba culture under discussion. In Dagaare, the genital organs are directly referred to as, *yoore* “penis,” and *pare*, “vagina”. Using these explicit statements in social speech is considered unfriendly and demonstrates communicative incompetence. As a result, various euphemistic terms are utilized in Dagaare to code these sex organs in every social speech act and context in which they are mentioned.

To avoid being considered impolite and uncultured, speakers must follow social norms in all speech situations and events. These euphemistic terms, unlike the direct words, do not endanger the interlocutors’ faces or portray the one using them as communicatively incapable.



Data 17

Euphemisms for the male sexual organ in Dagaare

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| (a) <i>O dɔɔlon</i> | “his manhood” |
| (b) <i>O yidandɔɔ</i> | “his landlord” |
| (c) <i>O marefa</i> | “his gun” |
| (d) <i>O dalee</i> | “his small stick” |
| (e) <i>O bone</i> | “his thing” |

- (f) *O nimitɔɔre bone* “his front thing”
- (g) *O gbelime* “his bell”
- (h) *O Dakuraa/kojo/kofi* “his Dakurah/kojo/kofi”
- (i) *O sikiri dalee* “his sugar small stick”

Euphemisms for the female sexual organ in Dagaare

- (a) *O pɔgelon* “her womanhood”
- (b) *O die* “her room”
- (c) *O puli bone* “the thing under her”
- (d) *Dɔbo di zie* “men eating place”
- (e) *Oreema* “smiling thing”
- (f) *Merema* “flat thing”



4.1.3 Euphemisms on the theme of menstruation

Menstruation is seen through a cultural lens that combines beliefs about purity, and taboos. Menstruation might be associated with impurity, leading to the restriction of menstruating women from certain domestic activities such as preparations of meals among the Dagaaba. It is also regarded as a significant rite of passage into womanhood. Among many cultures, menstruating women may be discouraged from participating in certain religious or spiritual activities, or from coming into contact with sacred objects or spaces. As mentioned earlier, the Dagaaba perceive menstruation as something which is highly impure to be seen or talked about openly. As a result, euphemistic expressions are employed to cover up the

concept. From the data, it reveals that the Dagaaba conceptualized menstruation in the following:

Data 18

This is an interaction where a mother was advising her daughter on how to protect herself because she had started menstruation.

Daughter: *Nma, a yeɛ ɲa naɲ piili zaa, n poɔ maɲ deɛ beɛɛ la.*

Mother, since this thing started, my stomach has always aching.

Mother: *Lɛ ka a maɲ eɛ noba yaga. Pampana ɲa fo naɲ piili tona pɔgeba toma, wuli ka fo kpɛ la pɔgeba poɔ. Baɲ fo gbɛɛ bimmu.*

It is normal to many. Now that you have started doing women's work/thing shows you have entered into womanhood. Know your footsteps.

Analysis:

It is obvious that menstruation is solely for women or it is women who menstruate. A man cannot menstruate therefore the act is kept for women only. As a result the statement *tona la pɔgeba toma*, “doing women work/thing” is a euphemistic statement used to express menstruation among the Dagaaba and any person hearing this statement about a woman will surely understand that the woman is in her menses. The Dagaaba associate menstruation with something unclean based on the assumption that menstrual blood is impure. So, the statement "doing women's work/thing" is usually used as a cover-up expression to save the faces of women who are going through menstruation.

Data 19

This was a casual interaction amongst women concerning husbands' refusals on food cooked by menstruating women where one happens to be a hunter's wife.

Hunter's wife: *Ka maa wa pegerɛ, n koŋ sage peelee daŋaa pare a na wa yele diibu maalo.*

If I'm washing, I dare not go closer to the cooker to talk of cooking.

Woman: *N sere ba kyiire a diibu.*

My husband does not taboo eating it.

Analysis:

The Dagaaba conceptualized menstruation as "washing". Mostly when a woman is menstruating, she is viewed as one contaminated with blood or dirty and needs to clean herself. During this period, the woman is often seen washing and bathing to keep off dirt or blood. Washing is therefore a way of cleaning or purifying herself from the dirt. The phrase *ka maa wa pegerɛ*, "if I'm washing" is a euphemistic expression used by the hunter's wife to refer to menstruation. This indirection maintains decorum and avoids embarrassment or discomfort among the interlocutors.

Data 20

This conversation occurred between X and Y. X's girlfriend had visited him, and his friend Y was making fun of him for not sleeping the night before.

Y: *Dɔɔ kpoŋ, ka a zaamee tonsonne?*

Big man, how was your yesterday's good work?

X: *N ba, a za a ba yi diibu oo, a bie yele ka o nyɛ la o kyuu.*

My friend, it didn't yield food yesterday; the girl said that she had seen her month.

Analysis:

The statement "she has seen her month" refers to a woman's menstrual cycle as a regular and predictable event characterized by the passage of time. Because a woman menstruates every month on some specific days, she is considered as one who has seen her month when experiencing her menstrual flow on these specific days. The expression, *o nyɛ la o kyuu*, "she has seen her month" is understandable within the context and communicates clearly to Y that X's girlfriend is menstruating, which explains why "it didn't yield food yesterday," another euphemism referring to the inability to engage in sexual activity. In the context of the conversation, menstruation is portrayed as an obstacle to X's "good work" (meaning sexual intercourse). Menstruation becomes a barrier that prevents sexual intercourse. By using the euphemism, X employs a politeness strategy, showing respect for the listener and possibly the subject of the conversation by not being direct.

Other euphemistic expressions associated with menstruation among the Dagaaba are shown below;

Data 21

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| (a) <i>O be la o bebie poɔ</i> | "she is in her days" |
| (b) <i>O dɔgerɔ la abɛ zeere</i> | "she is cooking palm-nut soup" |

4.1.4 Euphemisms on the theme of pregnancy

Pregnancy is seen as a blessing from the ancestors and the divine. Among the Dagaaba, a woman who is pregnant is thought to have received favour from the ancestors and the divine. Pregnancy also reflects a transition into motherhood, which is highly valued and signifies the continuation of lineage. Among the Dagaaba, there are various beliefs and taboos surrounding pregnancy, some of which are aimed at protecting the mother and the unborn child. A pregnant woman may be advised to avoid certain foods, places, or actions that are believed to negatively affect the pregnancy. For instance, a pregnant woman is restricted from climbing a tree. The family and extended community play a significant role in providing support to the pregnant woman. Elderly women, who have experienced childbirth, give advice and guidance to the pregnant woman to ensure a healthy pregnancy. Pregnancy is a result of sexual intercourse. Though it is not bad, people hold negative thoughts about it, therefore the Dagaaba employs euphemisms to discuss it as a way of protecting the pregnant woman and the unborn child.

Below are euphemistic representations of pregnancy among the Dagaaba;

Data 22

When Man A returned from the hospital, he asked Man B whether they had a patient at the hospital because he had seen Man B's brother's wife there but couldn't greet her.

Man A: *N nyɛ la fo beere pɔge asibiti poɔ, kyɛ te ba toɔ puori taa. Yɛ taa baala be?*

I have seen your brother's wife at the hospital. But we couldn't greet. Do you have a patient?

Man B: *Õð, ona la a baala, bie nyɔge o la. Gaaloo la ka o gaa.*

Yes, she is the patient; bullets have caught her. She went for antenatal.

Analysis:

The male sex organ is conceptualized as a gun ‘*marefa*’, among the Dagaaba. In this case, the sperm metaphorically is the bullets from the gun into the woman during sexual intercourse leading to pregnancy. In this conversation, *bie nyɔge o la*, “bullets have caught her,” is a euphemistic expression adopted by Man B to refer to his brother’s wife’s pregnancy implicitly. Though couples anticipate pregnancy, it comes unexpectedly, much like being struck by a bullet. In this context, something sudden and external has happened to the woman, catching her off guard. Again, pregnancy is seen as a state where the woman goes through some pain, hardship, or challenges, similar to what animals go through when being caught by bullets. The expression is a humorous euphemistic way of announcing pregnancy to save the face of the pregnant woman.

Data 23

Speaker 1: *Bebie ŋa poɔ, N ba la nyɛɛ fo naapɔge, o taa laafeɛ?*

These days, I haven't been seeing your daughter-in-law, is she fine?

Speaker 2: *O ba so laafeɛ le. O ŋmaaɛ see.*

She is not very fine. She has a cut waist.

Analysis:

In this dialogue, it is noted that Speaker 1 hasn't seen Speaker 2's daughter-in-law for a few days. As a way of showing concern and care, Speaker 1 asked about the health status of Speaker 2's daughter-in-law. A euphemistic expression, *o ηmaaε σεε*, "she has cut waist," was used by Speaker 2 in her response to announce her daughter-in-law's pregnancy. The euphemism, *o ηmaaε σεε*, "she has cut waist," conceptualizes pregnancy in a way that emphasizes the physical changes and burdens associated with carrying a child. In the Dagaaba culture, the waist is often seen as a centre of strength and balance, and pregnancy naturally causes a change in posture, weight, and movement. The phrase "cut waist" suggests that the normal function of the waist has been altered, signifying the pregnancy's impact on the woman's body. This also implies that the woman's usual activities may be limited due to her condition. The euphemism acknowledges the pregnancy in a manner that shows respect and care while still keeping privacy.

Data 24

A man notices his friend's wife is not actively participating in the farm work, so he asks his friend what the reason could be.

Man A: *N dɔɔ, a fo pɔge ba so laafeε be?*

My friend, is your wife not well?

Man B: *O taa laafeε kyε o ba la e nenzagelaa.*

She is well, but she is no longer an empty person.

Man A: *A le soma la. A koη kɔre kyε te nyε la saana.*

That is good. It won't be long and we will receive a stranger.

Analysis:

In the conversation above, Man B uses a euphemism, an indirection strategy to announce the wife's pregnancy to his friend. The euphemistic expression, *o ba la e nenzagelaa*, "she is no longer an empty person," presents pregnancy as a condition of fullness, directly associated with fertility and the ability to create life. "She is no longer an empty person," implies that she has something valuable and significant inside her, thus a baby. In this sense, her body is no more "empty" but enriched with the promise of new life. This euphemism emphasizes the woman's role as a creator and nurturer. As a way of maintaining decorum and politeness, Man B used a euphemism, *o ba la e nenzagelaa*, "she is no longer an empty person," as a culturally respectful and indirect way of referring to someone pregnant.

Some euphemisms related to pregnancy among the Dagaaba are presented beneath;

Data 25

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| (a) <i>O gale la kyuu</i> | "she jumped/crossed a month" |
| (b) <i>O daareɛ toriko</i> | "she is pushing truck" |
| (c) <i>O kɔɔɛ o gbere</i> | "He broke her leg" |
| (d) <i>O pɔmpe o la</i> | "He has pumped/inflated her" |
| (e) <i>Baala la</i> | "she is sick" |

4.1.5 Euphemisms on the theme of drunks/alcoholism

Among the Dagaaba, alcoholism is generally perceived negatively, as it is often associated with irresponsible behaviour, lack of self-control, and social disgrace. The Dagaaba culture values respect, self-discipline, and the maintenance of good social order, so excessive drinking or drunkenness can lead to stigmatization. Drunks may be viewed as deviating from these values and risking not only their reputation but also the reputation of their family and community.

While alcohol, particularly local brews such as pito (a traditional beer), plays a significant role in social and cultural life, excessive drinking and drunken behaviour are generally frowned upon among the Dagaaba. As a result, drunks are often perceived as people who cannot be trusted to behave appropriately or make judgments, which is viewed as a failure to adhere to the cultural norms of respect and discipline. Nevertheless, like in many other cultures, the Dagaaba do tolerate drinking in moderation, especially during social gatherings, funerals, festivals, or ceremonies. In these contexts, alcohol consumption is sometimes part of the social interaction, but the expectation is that individuals should remain respectful and in control of their actions. However, when one crosses the line into drunkenness, he or she risks social criticism and may be subjected to jokes, disrespect, or even exclusion from certain activities. As a result, instead of directly saying *o bugee la*, “he or she is drunk”, the Dagaaba often employed euphemisms to refer to drunks to save their social faces.

The data below shows how the Dagaaba use euphemistic expressions to refer to drunks in conversations.

Data 26

This conversation happened during a funeral between Person A and Person B about a middle-aged man who was visibly drunk and unable to walk well.

Person A: *Ba paa maŋ fere tuuli la kaŋ a dāã be?*

Do they always force one to take drinks?

Person B: *Vi la. Pɔlee naŋ seŋ ŋaa zaa kyɛ eŋe bibile nɔɔtɛɛ neŋyaga poɔ.*

It is a shame. A grown young man like him is wearing a child's sandals in public.

Analysis:

The statement *eŋe bibile nɔɔtɛɛ*, "wearing a child's sandals," is a euphemistic expression used by Person B to describe a drunk in the conversation. The statement reflects a view of drunkenness as a state of regression or loss of maturity. Sandals are associated with stages of life; children typically wear smaller, less sturdy, symbolizing dependency, immaturity, and a lack of full responsibility. In this context, a grown man now wearing a child's sandals implies that he is no longer fitting the 'shoes' of an adult, but rather acting immaturely, like a child who does not understand consequences. Again, an adult wearing a child's sandals will dangle trying to walk in them, so the dangling nature is compared to a drunk who is unable to walk well as a result of the alcohol.

Through the lens of politeness theory, the euphemism *eŋe bible nɔɔtɛɛ*, "wearing a child's sandals," is a polite, face-saving way to criticize the grown young man for drunken behaviour. It enables Person B to politely express his disapproval of the young man's behaviour without directly calling him a drunk.

Data 27

During Sigri Baapare Youth Association festival, a well-known man was drunk, stumbling, and struggling to maintain his balance. His behaviour caught the attention of others at the event, as he disrupted conversations and knocked over a few chairs. An elderly man asked some boys to send him home.

Elderly man: *Sɔrɔ la n bidɔbɔ, yɛ nan taa o gaa ne yiri ka o te penne. O kpɛɛ kɔɔ.*

Please my sons, kindly send him home to rest. He entered water.

Analysis:

The utterance *o kpɛɛ kɔɔ*, “he entered water,” is a euphemism adopted by the elderly man during the conversation to refer to the drunk. The statement “he entered water” vividly shows the drunken man’s physical instability. Just as a person struggles to maintain their footing and balance when in water, the drunken man is seen stumbling and knocking over chairs. The euphemism also depicts his lack of control and coordination, as if drowned in water. The elderly man's use of "entered water" is a form of negative politeness, as it softens the criticism of the man's drunkenness. Rather than directly stating, “He is drunk,” which could be viewed as harsh or disrespectful, the euphemism frames the situation as something external that has happened to the man. This choice of words allows the elderly man to express concern for the drunk without attacking his dignity publicly.

Data 28

This conversation was about a man who attended a funeral with his colleagues but was unable to return home by himself as a result of excessive alcohol.

Man A: *Fo too gaa nye la a fo zo? O iree velaa?*

Are you able to go and see your friend? Did he wake up well?

Man B: *O iree velaa kye N ba de fere o fẽẽ zaa.*

He woke up well, but I didn't spare him at all.

Man A: *Wola ka dɔɔ kpon zaa maɲ deɛ gaa kuori zie a te kuoli a ko la baɲ gaa yiri omeɲɛ?*

How can a grown man always go to a funeral place and get over-satisfied and cannot go home by himself?



Analysis:

In this conversation, the euphemism, *kuoli*, "over-satisfied," is employed to describe a man who drank excessively at a funeral and was unable to return home on his own. The term "over-satisfied" replaces the more direct and potentially defaming word "drunk," softening the criticism of the man's behaviour. The statement also implies that the man indulged too much, not just in drinking but in the overall enjoyment of the event leading to his inability to go home. *Kuoli*, "over-satisfied," suggests going beyond what is reasonable, thus it portrays the man's actions as crossing the line in enjoyment at the event. The euphemism

helps the speaker to maintain politeness and preserve the dignity of the man being discussed.

Other euphemistic expressions associated with drunks among the Dagaaba are shown below;

Data 29

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| (a) <i>O ghere fẽẽrẽ la</i> | “his or her leg is tightened” |
| (b) <i>O soe dãã</i> | “s/he bath drink” |
| (c) <i>O balẽ la</i> | “s/he is tired” |
| (d) <i>O sãã omeɲe</i> | “s/he spoiled him/herself” |
| (e) <i>O tẽgẽ la</i> | “s/he is satisfied” |

4.2. The functions of euphemisms in the lives of the Dagaaba.

Euphemism, an indirect strategy that involves using mild, indirect, or vague expressions in place of those we deem harsh, socially unacceptable, taboo, profane, and vulgar, is a common feature in many languages and cultures. Among the Dagaaba, euphemism plays a pivotal role in their everyday communication, shaping the way potentially offensive topics are addressed. The Dagaaba also place a high value on communal respect, politeness, and social harmony, which is reflected in their linguistic practices. My data and interviews revealed that the Dagaaba employ euphemisms in their everyday conversations for a variety of purposes.

The functions of euphemism among the Dagaaba are dealt with below;

4.2.1 Disguise/cover-up as a function of euphemisms

One of the basic functions of euphemism among the Dagaaba is that it disguises or hides the reality of the topic being discussed. There is a discrepancy between the literal or surface meaning and the target/intended/actual meaning. In the context of euphemism, “disguise” refers to the use of milder or more socially acceptable words or phrases to hide/cover the impact of harsh, unpleasant, or taboo topics. The goal of disguise is to obscure the reality of the situation, often making the topic under discussion less offensive, less direct, or more palatable for the listener or reader.

Beneath shows the Dagaaba use of euphemism to disguise or hide reality in conversations;

Data 30

Speaker 1: *N dɔɔ, pito kɔnnɔuuri kpɛ ma la.*

My friend, I'm thirsty for pito.

Speaker 2: *Lɛ la n mɛɛ, kyɛ zomponji be la n kɔrɛɲ.*

I too but there is a hedgehog in my pocket.

Analysis:

The conversation above is between two friends, where speaker 1 expresses his thirst for pito to his friend. Speaker 2 employed a euphemistic expression in his response; thus, *Zomponji be la n kɔrɛɲ*, “there is a hedgehog in my pocket,” to mean that ‘he has no money’ though he is equally thirsty. The euphemism indirectly communicates a lack of money on the part of Speaker 2 without explicitly stating it. The reality of being broke or having no money is hidden in Speaker 2 statement. A hedgehog with its sharp quills implies that

reaching into the pocket is dangerous or undesirable, symbolizing the discomfort of having no money. This functions as a disguise/cover-up euphemism because it hides the potentially embarrassing or awkward admission of being broke, jacketing it with a metaphorical image. The euphemism allows Speaker 2 to disguise or hide the reality of “no money or broke” without being embarrassed, hence maintaining politeness and saving his social face.

Data 31

Man A: *Baguo zaa ka n poɔ deɛ yɛ dɔɔnɔ ma.*

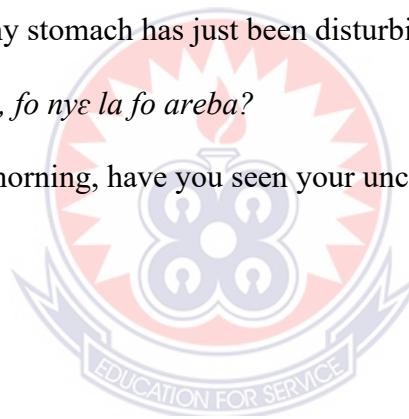
Since morning, my stomach has just been disturbing me.

Man B: *Ana a baguo zaa, fo nyɛ la fo areba?*

But since in the morning, have you seen your uncle?

Man A: *Aai.*

No.



Analysis:

Disguise as a function of euphemism is realized in the above conversation. “Have you seen your uncle,” is a disguise euphemism used by Man B in his response, when Man A complains about his stomach. In this context, "Have you seen your uncle," is a euphemism employed to inquire if Man A has eaten without openly addressing hunger. Man B preserves the dignity of Man A by not making hunger or a lack of food the centre or cause of his stomach problems in his inquires. The euphemism allows him to inquire politely, and non-intrusively considering the discomfort of not eating. The context of the conversation helps the participants to comprehend the message.

4.2.2. Avoidance as a function of euphemisms

In conversation, euphemisms are employed to avoid certain expressions or terms that are regarded as culturally inappropriate, socially constrained, offensive, or harsh and may cause discomfort in the individual's behaviour. As a result, some sensitive topics such as; death, sexual intercourse, and human sex organs, are curbed because their explicit use evokes fear, sadness, disgust, vulgarity, and shame in participants. Euphemisms enable interlocutors to address these sensitive subjects indirectly, thereby minimizing discomfort and maintaining social harmony.

Some examples of euphemisms in utterances which serve avoidance purposes;

Data 32

Person A: *N dɔɔ, yeli yelmeɲe, fo zaamee taa neɛ gaa ne yiri.*

My friend, tell the truth, yesterday you sent someone home.

Person B: *Ei, yelmeɲe la, kyɛ zaamee na eɲ, n nu ba kpɛ.*

Ei, it's true, but as for yesterday, my hand didn't enter.

Analysis:

In the above conversation, Person A has seen Person B going home with a girl, so he questioned him to know what transpired. Person B agreed that he sent someone home but his hand didn't enter. The euphemism used is, *n nu ba kpɛ*, “my hand didn’t enter.” In this context, the euphemism “my hand didn’t enter,” allows Person B to communicate that sexual intercourse didn’t occur without directly mentioning sex. This functions as an avoidance strategy by dodging the direct nature of the act, making the topic less confrontational or awkward. Person B maintains privacy and avoids embarrassing or uncomfortable details, thereby preserving a sense of modesty and respect.

Data 33

Speaker A: *Zaamee, mba X gbere da fẽẽrẽẽ la a tigiri zie.*

Yesterday, Mr X's leg was tightened at the festival ground.

Speaker B: *A ba e ma seelee bonso dãã zaamee bebe.*

I am not surprised because there were enough drinks yesterday.

Analysis:

In this dialogue, Speaker A reports to Speaker B what happened at the festival ground when he left. Speaker B isn't surprised to hear that Mr X is drunk because there is enough to drink at the festival grounds. The euphemism, *gbere da fẽẽrẽẽ*, "leg was tightened," indirectly refers to Mr X being drunk at the festival ground yesterday, avoiding direct mention of alcoholism. The euphemism serves as an avoidance strategy by softening the description, thereby reducing the potential for judgment or embarrassment. It keeps the tone light, allowing participants to discuss the situation without directly labeling it as *bugibu*, "drunkenness," which can carry negative connotations.

Data 34

Man: *Fo bidɔɔ toɲe la dɔɔ toma. O kɔɔe o pɔge gbere.*

Your son has done a man's work. He broke his wife's leg.

Woman: *A kɔɔrẽẽ ka n ba la woɲ ba yeɛ. Naanmene bareka.*

It's been a long time since I heard from them. Thank God.

Analysis:

From the above interaction, the man announces his daughter-in-law's pregnancy to his wife. With the help of indirect language, avoidance of euphemistic expression was used to

discuss their son's wife's conception. The euphemism, *o kɔɔɛ o pɔge gbere*, “he broke his wife’s leg,” employed in the above conversation between a husband and wife, subtly indicates that their son has gotten his wife pregnant. The euphemism avoids direct mention of pregnancy or conception, thereby making it function as an avoidance strategy. Though pregnancy or conception was not explicitly mentioned in the conversation, the message was well understood by the woman. As a result, she thanks God for the good news and blessings upon her son and wife.

4.2.3. Humor as a function of euphemisms

Graesser (2016) defines humour in a broader sense as "anything said or done, intentionally or inadvertently, that is regarded to be hilarious or amusing." Difficult or embarrassing situations will always arise in everyday life. One can use funny ways to free himself from unpleasant or awkward situations. Therefore, during these tough times, euphemism language might be useful in getting people out of chimaeras. Humour functions as a euphemism in situations where one is using hilarious expressions or terms to escape embarrassment.

Some examples of euphemisms in conversation which serve humour purposes in Dagaare are below;

Data 35

Man: *Pɔgelee, boŋ la daara yiri le?*

Lady, what is pushing out like that?

Lady: *A ɔɔre naane daare belle ma ka a fo yɔɔ nyɔge ma pɔmpe bare.*

It is the cold weather that deceived me and made your brother pump/inflate me like that.

(They burst into laughter)

Analysis:

This conversation happened between an old man and his granddaughter-in-law. While the old man saw his granddaughter-in-law's protruding belly, he turned and asked her "What is pushing out like that?" The lady answered him by saying that it was the cold weather that deceived her and made his brother inflate/pump her. This is a hilarious conversation where pregnancy or conception is been talked about without directly mentioning it. The old man was teasing his granddaughter-in-law.

The context within which the euphemism "inflate/pump me," is used makes it function as a humor. The euphemism helps the lady navigate her way out of shame or any discomfort surrounding pregnancy.

Data 36

Man: *Pɔgeba koŋ baŋ sɔgele yeŋe fɛɛ zaa.*

Women can't hide things at all.

Woman: *Te na ba sɔgelɔ boma te naŋ e a woŋ noɔ.*

We don't hide things we did and enjoyed.

Analysis:

In the above conversation, the woman used a euphemistic expression which is *boma te naŋ e a woŋ noɔ*, "things we did and enjoyed" in her humorous conversation. The interaction took place at a pito base between a man and a pregnant woman. While the pregnant woman was about to pour the pito for the man, he looked at her and said; "women can't hide things

at all”. The pregnant woman replied to his statement by saying that they don’t hide things they did and enjoyed. Sex is being discussed in this conversation without directly mentioning it. Sexual intimacy is seen as a secret or private activity between couples. So, in this dialogue, the man is simply making fun of the woman for how she exposes what she and the husband did secretly. The woman quickly resorted to euphemism in a hilarious statement to evict herself from shame and also to save her face. Therefore, euphemism functions as humour in the conversation.

4.2.4. Politeness as a function of euphemism

The Dagaaba employ euphemisms in their everyday interactions to show politeness. Politeness as a function of euphemism shows how people consider each other’s faces in communication. The more people use politeness-euphemistic expressions or terms in conversations, the fewer people get embarrassed, take offence or fall into awkward situations. Also, conversations go smoothly when participants use politeness euphemisms. Participants in a conversation will employ politeness euphemistic expressions or terms to refer to people who are physically disabled to maintain their faces in the conversations. For instance, people use the euphemistic expression “mentally deranged” to refer to “mad,” “slow-witted”, “unwise” to refer to “foolish,” “unable to hear” to refer to “deaf,” and “plain-looking” rather than “ugly” to ensure politeness in their daily interactions.

In the politeness theory, euphemisms align with the concept of “positive face,” where participants show concern for others’ feelings and work to create a positive impression.

Below are some examples of euphemisms in conversation which serve politeness purposes in Dagaare;

Data 37

Man: *N na baɲ de la nenyeni yon gere a kuori zie bonso, n moto ba e kpeɛɲaa,*

I can only pick one person for the funeral because my motorbike is not strong.

Woman: *Ka le, ye vɛɲ ka o de n kpeɛmɛ, onan ba tɔɔ kyenne.*

Then, let him pick my sister, for she is unable to walk.

Analysis:

This interaction happened under a tree where some women gathered to go for a funeral, while a man offered to pick only one of the women because his motorbike was not in good shape. *Ba tɔɔ kyenne*, “Unable to walk,” is used as a polite euphemism to describe a woman who limps on her left leg. This phrasing avoids drawing attention to the specific physical limitation in a way that might be seen as disrespectful or potentially embarrassing. Instead, the statement emphasizes the need for assistance rather than the impairment itself, showing compassion for the woman’s condition. By employing euphemism as an indirect strategy, the speaker maintains a sense of dignity and respect for the woman, reflecting the Dagaaba cultural value of minimizing discomfort through polite and considerate expressions.

Data 38

Man A: *Mãã son a fo bidɔɔ koore a boɔ, bonso o yeli ka fɔɔ ton o.*

I helped your son to sell the goat because he said you sent him.

Man B: *O nii ba kpeere zage. N ba ton neezaa ziezaa.*

His cattle are not entering the pen. I haven’t sent anyone anywhere.

Man A: *Ka le a bie kpeere la noba zagere.*

Then the boy enters people's pens.

Analysis:

Man A, helps Man B's son sell a pregnant goat without knowing it was a stolen goat. When Man B inquired to know why his friend was selling a pregnant goat, he was shocked to know that the boy had lied to him. The expression "his cattle are not entering pen" means that the boy is a liar or his actions are unreliable. This is a polite way for Man B to indicate that his son is not being truthful. Instead of directly calling his son *zirii nmaara*, a "liar," he uses a euphemistic expression to imply that the boy's behaviour or intentions are not properly aligned. Similarly, "entering people's pens" is a euphemistic expression for theft among the Dagaaba. Instead of directly saying his friend's son is *nannyige*, a thief, or stealing, Man A chooses this euphemism to express it implicitly. By referring to the boy's behaviour in terms of entering other people's spaces or property (pens), Man A moderates the temperateness of the offence, choosing a less confrontational way to describe it. The participants soften the accusations, preserving social harmony and protecting the boy's reputation to some extent, while still communicating his dishonesty and theft.

Both euphemisms serve as politeness strategies that help Man A and Man B navigate the conversation in a way that minimizes the offence and preserves interpersonal relationships though the Dagaaba do not condone lies and stealing.

Data 39

Mother: *Yey ka fo nye libiri te da bol?*

Where did you get money and buy a ball?

Son: *N ba de fo libiri.*

I have not taken your money.

Mother: *Ka fõõ baa ne fo nu-wogi ña, a koñ soñ fo. Dee tu bogi de ãũ.*

If you grow with your longhand, it won't help you. Just dig a hole and bury it.

Analysis:

From the conversation, knowing that her son has no source of money, the mother suspects her son might pick some money she kept inside for other purposes and buy the ball. The boy however says he didn't pick her money. Interrogating further, the mother realizes that her son is not telling her the truth. The woman knowing that her son has a *nu-wogi*, "longhand," which is the tendency to take things that don't belong to him (thief), resorted to a euphemistic expression to warn and communicate her disapproval without disgracing him. The choice of this term by the mother softens the accusation, making it indirect and less offensive. This functions as a form of politeness, allowing the mother to address the issue of theft without harshly labelling her son as a thief, which could damage his self-image.

4.2.5 Development of intellect as a function of euphemism

The usage and interpretation of euphemisms enable people to develop their intellect and promote their cognitive skills such as critical thinking, cultural awareness, emotional intelligence, and analytical skills. Euphemisms enrich people's vocabulary by offering alternative, softer, or more palatable terms and expressions for discussing complex or difficult topics, such as death, sexual activities, sex organs, menstruation, alcoholism, and pregnancy. These terms or expressions often use polite language, allowing participants in

conversation to address issues that might otherwise feel unpleasant, taboo, vulgar, or offensive. For instance, among the Dagaaba, the male sex organ, the penis (*yoore*) is conceptualized as his gun (*o marefa*), and the female sex organ, the vagina (*paare*) is viewed as men eating place (*dɔbo di zie*) in a context of a conversation.

Again, since euphemisms are indirect, they require the listener or reader to infer meaning. As a result, the background or context underlying the conversation needs to be interpreted thereby making the individual think critically rather than taking the words at face value.

For instance: Elder 1 tells the community members that; *a naa dangbale kɔɔ la*, “the chief’s walking staff is broken”. As indicated earlier, this is a euphemistic expression for the death of a chief among the Dagaaba. The euphemism enhances critical thinking by prompting the community members to interpret the expression beyond its literal meaning. They must relate cultural symbols, like the ‘walking staff’, with the chief’s responsibilities. As the chief’s walking staff represents his authority, strength, support, and guidance among the Dagaaba, the community members will reflect on the symbolic meaning of the walking staff and then decode the meaning concerning its being broken.

This indirect style encourages critical thinking by requiring listeners to draw from cultural knowledge and comprehend the weight of the message delicately. This way, the euphemism not only conveys respect but also deepens understanding of the chief’s role, making the loss more profound through reflection and shared insight.

4.2.6 Reinforcement of cultural values as a function of euphemism

Among the Dagaaba, the usage of euphemisms serves as a vehicle for reinforcing cultural knowledge and norms. The beliefs, expectations, and moral ethics are indirectly embedded

and expressed in euphemisms within everyday interaction. Euphemisms guide social interactions in a way that aligns with culturally accepted behaviour, thereby showing respect by employing alternatives to direct language.

Data 40

Speaker 1: *Baguo zaa, N ba gan teen-to-noore.*

Since morning, I haven't crossed chin to mouth.

Speaker 2: *Ka le kyelle ma ka N bare gbere kye wa ka te gaa te di.*

Then wait for me to leave a leg and come for us to go and eat.

Analysis:

In the above conversation, the euphemisms *N ba gan teen-to-noore*, "I haven't crossed chin to mouth," and *bare gbere*, "to leave a leg," serve as indirect ways of conveying culturally sensitive actions about eating, hunger, and excretion.

The expression *N ba gan teen-to-noore*, "I haven't crossed chin to mouth," means I haven't eaten. It helps Speaker 1 to avoid a direct mention of hunger. This reinforces a cultural norm around polite indirectness, as it shows consideration for the listener by reframing personal needs in a non-demanding way. This choice reflects a value of humility and restraint, as Speaker 1 implies a lack of food without asking for help outright or emphasizing hunger directly.

Again, *bare gbere*, "to leave a leg" means to defecate or excrete. By using this euphemism, instead of directly mentioning defecation, Speaker 2 shows a preference for modesty, because discussing the need to excrete openly could lead to discomfort or embarrassment. The euphemism therefore enables the speaker to avoid discomfort and reinforces a cultural

standard that prefers polite language when talking about natural but potentially awkward situations.

4.2.7 Exclusivity as a function of euphemism

Among the Dagaaba, some euphemisms are used to exclude or eliminate some participants from a conversation. Exclusivity as a function of euphemism refers to the way euphemistic language can create or reinforce social boundaries by allowing only certain people or groups to fully understand the intended meaning. This function relies on shared knowledge, cultural context, or insider language, making the euphemism accessible primarily to those familiar with the context in which it is used. In reality, exclusivity works as a delicate tool of in-group communication. When extra meaning is embedded in certain terms or expressions and is understood only by a specific group of people, whether because of cultural, professional, or social background, they create a level of exclusivity that defines who is “in the know” versus those who are not. In a cultural or social context, euphemisms related to taboos, values, or norms may be used to cover meaning in a way that only community members or specific groups fully understand. By using euphemisms that outsiders might not fully comprehend, groups maintain their internal unity and a shared understanding, helping them preserve their group identity. In settings where privacy is critical such as medical, legal, or corporate environments, euphemisms help convey information without revealing sensitive details to the uninformed.

For instance, the expression, *N gere ka n puori Farefaree naa*, “I’m going to greet the Frafra chief,” is a cross-cultural euphemism understood by the Dagaaba and the Frafra, which refers to defecation. When a Frafra is also going to defecate, he or she can also say

he is going to greet the Dagaaba chief. This is a result of the Dagaaba and the Frafra being playmates traditionally. This euphemistic expression is culturally exclusive in the sense that the Dagao cannot tell the Akan man that he is going to greet the Akan chief to refer to defecation and vice versa. Due to exposure, the meaning of some in-group euphemistic terms or expressions might be known.

4.3 Influence of modernization on euphemisms among the Dagaaba.

For the Dagaaba like other cultures, euphemisms serve as an essential communication tool, enabling individuals to address sensitive topics with ease, respect, and discretion. As cultural values are embedded in the usage of euphemisms, it allows speakers to discuss, taboo, vulgar, profane, and unpleasant subjects in order to maintain social harmony and uphold respect in both public and private interactions.

After analyzing the data gathered, the researcher considers the impact or influence of modernization on euphemisms among the Dagaaba. By doing so, the researcher looks at the positive and negative impact modernization posed on euphemisms among the Dagaaba. However, as modernization progresses, due to increases in urbanization, technological advancement, and exposure to global cultures, society transforms.

4.3.1 Positive Impact of modernization on euphemisms among the Dagaaba.

As the Dagaaba interact more with other cultures due to exposure, they adapt new expressions to enhance communication across cultures. It was realized that new euphemistic expressions were introduced by the younger generation due to globalization. These new euphemistic expressions are very common within the discourse of the younger

generation. As access to media has grown globally, people are exposed to a wider variety of terms and expressions, both direct and indirect. Movies, music, and TV shows often introduce new slang or euphemisms for sensitive topics like death and sex. These terms can be normalized or popularized, allowing euphemisms to reflect current cultural trends.

For instance, “Netflix and chill” or “hook up” gained popularity through online media, becoming widely understood indirect reference for sexual activity.

As a result of modernization, some terminologies and expressions have been used as euphemisms among the Dagaaba.

Data 41

This interaction was among friends, where one of them asked his friends to find a girlfriend for him.

Speaker 1: *N dɔɔ mine, ye koŋ bɔ a biiri kaŋa ko ma?*

My friends, won't you look for any of the children for me?

Speaker 2: *Aba! A yiri ŋa poɔ, fɔɔ naane nee naŋ taa a biiri ŋa faŋa?*

Aba! In this town, aren't you the one who possesses the strength of these children?

Analysis:

Among the Dagaaba, the direct expression for boyfriend or girlfriend is “*sene*,” but due to exposure like in English where “baby” refers to boyfriend or girlfriend, the youth of the Dagaaba have their way of discussing boyfriend and girlfriend without directly mentioning it.

In this interaction, the participants' reference to "children" as a euphemism is a clever use of language influenced by modernized social and cultural expressions. "Children" are young and dependent individuals, but in this context of usage, it indicates romantic partners, specifically, girlfriends. This shift shows how modernization affects language, especially in terms of relationships and social roles. Just as "baby" has become a popular term of endearment for a romantic partner in English, "children" in this context operates similarly by shifting from its literal meaning to a more romantic and intimate one. Again, using "children" in the conversation not only disguises the direct meaning but also establishes a sense of shared understanding between the speakers. The choice of "children" by Speaker 1 and by Speaker 2 softens the directness of mentioning "girlfriend." This indirection strategy allows the participants to discuss the topic implicitly, perhaps to maintain a sense of discretion or to avoid excessively explicit references to romantic involvement.

In the lens of politeness theory, speaker 1 saves his positive face by employing "children" as a euphemistic term to communicate his lack of a girlfriend without any embarrassment or discomfort.

Additionally, modernization also resulted in some euphemisms for sexual intercourse among the Dagaaba.

Data 42

Speaker 1: *Lɛ fo nan kaara a pɔgesaraa ŋa, n baŋe ka fo na vere o la.*

The way you are looking at this girl, I know you will operate her.

Speaker 2: O! *N baare o la. N daare ɔɔ o la yaga.*

Oh! I finished her. I last chop her more.

Analysis:

In this dialogue, the expressions *vere o*, *baare o*, and *ɔɔ o* “operate her,” “finished her,” and “chop her” respectively, are euphemistic expressions for engaging in sexual intercourse. These expressions are a result of modernization. "Operation" in a medical sense refers to an incision procedure, typically performed with precision and skill. In adapting this term as a euphemism for sexual intercourse, the younger generations of the Dagaaba are drawing on the concept of manhood being a tool, to act by opening the womanhood. "Finished her" as a euphemism for sexual intimacy in this context suggests a sense of completion, where the act of intimacy is perceived as an emotional and physical assignment among the Dagaaba youth. This also reflects a modern, open discussion of sexual relationships that acknowledges the intensity of intimate encounters. Modern influences encourage more explicit expression of emotions and physical experiences, allowing speakers to communicate the full impact of intimacy in a way that feels relatable and complete. The euphemism “finished her” also carries a sense of pride aligning with the influence of modern youth discourse that sometimes valorizes a confident, even boastful attitude toward romantic and sexual conquests.

Again, the term “chop” in its literal sense means to eat or consume, and metaphorically, it conveys the idea of satisfying a desire. In this context, “chop her” frames sexual intimacy as an act of “consumption,” aligning with a modern perspective that often equates romantic or sexual experiences with personal gratification or fulfilling desires. Euphemisms like these provide a layer of privacy. The expressions act as codes, understood only by certain

people within a culture or social group. This language helps the speakers avoid directness while ensuring that the meaning is accessible to those in the know, creating a sense of exclusivity.

4.3.2 Negative impact of modernization on euphemisms among the Dagaaba.

Many Dagaaba euphemisms are transmitted orally, relying on traditional forms of storytelling, proverbs, and social ceremonies. Modernization has led to a decline in these oral traditions as people shift to written and digital communication, resulting in less use and transmission of euphemisms within families and communities. Again, due to modernization, younger generations use modern euphemisms, which can replace or alter the traditional Dagaaba euphemisms, thereby reducing their cultural significance.

For instance, the Dagaaba younger generation uses the euphemisms, *n di o la*, *n kpɛ la o poɔ*, *n marefa/daa koŋee o zu*, “I have eaten her,” “I have entered her inside,” and “my gun/stick has sounded on her” respectively to refer to having sexual intercourse with her, instead of the traditional Dagaaba euphemisms for sexual intercourse such as; *te laŋe la seŋe*, *te laŋe la taa*, *ane n gaŋe ne o la*, “we shared a bed,” “we got together,” and “I slept with her” respectively.

Though these modern euphemisms still enable individuals to discuss sensitive topics without difficulty and discomfort, there is the fear of losing cultural values and norms embedded in traditional euphemisms.

4.4 Summary

This chapter investigated the pragmatics of euphemistic expressions in Dagaare. That is, the various conceptualizations of the expressions relating to the specific themes identified by the researcher, such as; the theme of death, theme of sexual intercourse and sex organs, the theme, of drunk/alcoholism, the theme of pregnancy, and the theme of menstruation. It was seen that the Dagaaba society uses euphemistic expressions based on the topic of discussion. Also, to protect one's face/image during conversation, euphemistic expressions are used; therefore, Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory was used in the analysis of the data.

The functions of euphemisms among the Dagaaba were also identified and discussed. It was recognized that the Dagaaba use euphemisms to cover up or disguise, for avoidance purposes, for politeness purposes, for humour, for the development of intellects, to reinforce cultural values, and for exclusivity purposes.

The chapter finally discussed the impact or influence of modernization on euphemisms among the Dagaaba. The positive and negative impact was discussed.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the general conclusions of the study; it summarizes the thesis by highlighting the major findings of the study which focused on the use of euphemisms as an indirection strategy in conversation as established in the selected themes, the functions and the influence of modernization on euphemisms among the Dagaaba. Again, the chapter provides recommendations for future investigations as far as the study of euphemism is concerned.

5.1 Summary of the study

The study's purpose was to examine euphemisms as an indirection strategy in communication among the Dagaaba. It set out to inquire about the meaning of euphemistic expressions used among the Dagaaba in conversations. The research further sought to find out the functions of the euphemistic expressions and how modernization influences the use of euphemisms among the Dagaaba. The study focused on euphemism as an indirection strategy in communication among the Dagaaba in the context of politeness theory. The concept of "face," representing the public self-image each member aspires to project, forms the foundation of politeness theory. Politeness enables the participants to consider "face" in conversation by employing euphemistic expressions as an indirection strategy.

This thesis consists of five chapters. The first chapter presents the general introduction and the outline of each chapter. It discusses the background of the study as well as the background of the Dagaaba. Thus, a brief discussion concerning the language (Dagaare) and its speakers is provided. It is noted that the speakers of the language (Dagaare) are called Dagaaba (plural) and Dagao (singular), and the land is called Dagao/Dagawee/Dagapaalon. Also, the four major dialects of Dagaare classified by Bodomo (1997) are the Northern dialect, Western dialect, Central dialect, and Southern dialect. But speakers of all the Dagaare dialects can understand one another despite a few minor difficulties (Rattray, 1969). The research focuses on the central dialect, mostly spoken in Jirapa and its surrounding areas, as it is heavily represented in the language orthography. The statement of the problem, the purpose, and the significance of the study were established. The chapter also spelled out the objectives and research questions. The last section of the first chapter presents the organization of the thesis.

Chapter Two (2) reviewed literature relevant to the study on euphemism as an indirection strategy in communication. The discussed literature included the notion of culture, the concept of pragmatics, indirection, and the strategies of indirection. The chapter further reviewed euphemisms and their functions. A review of some related studies on euphemism was discussed. It also discussed Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory as the theoretical framework of the study and ends with the notion.

Chapter Three (3) provided an overview of the methodology used in this study. It adopted the qualitative and ethnographic research approach and design respectively. The rationale behind the choice of qualitative and ethnography research design and approach is to enable a detailed description of the euphemism as an indirection strategy in communication among

the Dagaaba. Jirapa, Sigri, and Tizza in the Jirapa Municipality of the Upper West Region of Ghana are the research sites. These communities were chosen because of their cultural background and the accessibility of participants. The data was gathered from primary sources. Thus, the recordings the researcher obtained from the everyday interaction between participants in natural settings. Again, the data collection techniques were observation and unstructured interviews. The researcher has to observe different kinds of conversations since euphemisms do not occur in isolation but in discourse conversation. Apart from the main participants that were purposively sampled, the researcher also applied his native speaker's intuition in the data collection.

Chapter Four (4) provides the analysis and discussions of the data on the topic “Euphemism as an indirection strategy among the Dagaaba.” The chapter examined euphemistic expressions in some selected themes, such as the theme of death, the theme of sexual intercourse, the theme of drunk/alcoholism, the theme of menstruation, and the theme of pregnancy. It also explores the functions of euphemism in conversations among the Dagaaba. Moreover, the chapter concludes by investigating the influence of modernization on euphemism among the Dagaaba.

Chapter Five (5) summarises the study, outlines the findings, concludes the study and further provides some recommendations for future researchers.

5.2 Findings

As noted in chapter one under the purpose of the study, the literature on euphemism in Dagaare is inadequate; therefore, this study has contributed by providing evidence on how

the use of euphemism manifests in the everyday interactions among the Dagaaba in various situations and themes.

The study's findings reveal that Dagaaba uses euphemistic expressions in various themes, such as death, sexual intercourse and sex organs, pregnancy, menstruation, and drunk/alcoholism. The study also shows different euphemistic expressions conceptualized under every theme. It was realized that most of the euphemistic expressions, especially the death of a chief among the Dagaaba, were metaphorical.

Again, the study disclosed that euphemistic expressions are best understood in context. The Dagaaba employ euphemistic expressions to avoid taboo, vulgar, profane, unpleasant, and offensive words or expressions to save face in conversation, endorsing Fernández's (2006) affirmation that euphemistic expressions are employed "to mitigate the potential dangers of certain taboo words or phrases considered too blunt or offensive for a given social situation."

Furthermore, the study disclosed that the use of euphemisms in conversation among the Dagaaba has several functions:

- (1) Euphemism disguises or covers up sensitive topics in conversation.
- (2) Euphemism functions as an avoidance strategy in communication.
- (3) It functions as humour in conversation.
- (4) It functions as a politeness strategy in communication.
- (5) It enables speakers to develop intellect.
- (6) Euphemism reinforces cultural values among speakers.
- (7) Euphemism also serves exclusivity functions.

This is evident that the Dagaaba use of euphemisms in their daily interaction is not only to avoid taboo, vulgar, profane, unpleasant, and offensive words or expressions, but euphemisms can also be employed to exclude participants in conversation. It is also a way of reinforcing cultural values as well as serving as humour by entertaining participants in a conversation. By analyzing and interpreting euphemistic expressions in conversation, individuals develop intellect through thinking.

It was observed that modernization has posed some influence on the use of euphemisms among the Dagaaba.

- Positively, modernization enables the younger generations to adapt new euphemistic expressions to enhance communication across cultures.
- Negatively, modernization has declined oral traditions, such as storytelling, where the Dagaaba euphemisms are orally transmitted. This resulted in less transmission and usage of euphemisms within families and communities among the Dagaaba. It was also noted that the use of modern euphemistic expressions could alter traditional euphemisms by reducing their cultural significance.

5.3 Conclusion

The current study explored euphemism as an indirection strategy in communication among the Dagaaba, within the purview of Brown and Levinson's politeness theory. By so doing, it examined euphemistic expressions employed in daily interaction among the Dagaaba in

various themes. It also investigates the functions of euphemisms in conversation and the influence of modernization on euphemisms among the Dagaaba.

The effect of euphemism as an indirection strategy in communication shows that language plays a pivotal role in the efficacy and growth of people in a particular community. This ascertains that the language of euphemism is a very powerful communication tool for individuals and the community at large. The euphemistic expressions are viewed as good communicative strategies that help manage daily interactions among participants. Therefore, people are considered uncultured and have communicative incompetence when they use direct language instead of euphemistic language in conversation.

5.4 Recommendations

Although the present study revealed and cherished euphemism as an indirection strategy in communication among the Dagaaba, the findings did not claim to have discovered the entire phenomenon. I recommend that future researchers explore other indirection strategies in communication such as; sarcasm, humour, circumlocution, and evasion. Again, it is recommended that further study be done on the structure of euphemism and stylistic devices in euphemism. Also, other researchers should explore the role of euphemism in child upbringing since euphemism is seen as a powerful communication tool.

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