Revue de Traduction et Langues Volume 23 Numéro 01/2024
Journal of Translation Languages **مجلة الترجمة واللغات**
ISSN (Print): 1112-3974 **EISSN (Online): 2600-6235**
DOI: https://doi.org/10.52919/translang.v23i1.978

Sociolinguistic Investigation of Euphemisms in Yorùbá and Ẹ̀dó

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To cite this paper:
Ikotun, R. O., Olowo, K. O., & Afolabi, I. O. (2024). Sociolinguistic Investigation of Euphemisms in Yorùbá and Ẹ̀dó. *Traduction Et Langues, 23(1),* 186-204.

Received: 21/04/2024; **Accepted**: 08/06/2024, **Published:** 30/07/2024

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Keywords

Euphemism, Politeness, Euphemism in Yorùbá, Euphemism in Ẹ̀dó, Sociolinguistics

Abstract

Euphemisms are an essential lubricant for interpersonal communication, used to deliver complex and somewhat provocative messages more placidly and thoughtfully. Therefore, they play a crucial role in social interactions and daily conversations. This study investigates the sociocultural nuances that influence the use of euphemisms among Yorùbá and Ẹ̀dó speakers, as well as how the speakers employ the rewording system to manage intricate social relationships in culturally sensitive environments and sustain harmony within their communities. Unlike previous research focusing broadly on African and Nigerian languages, this research compares the nuanced use of euphemisms among speakers of these specific cultural and linguistic groups. The study employs an eclectic framework based on the Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987) and the Connotative Theory of Meaning (Trask, 1999). Qualitative data gathered through recordings and transcribed interviews with adult native speakers, were thematically analysed. The findings reveal that both Yorùbá and Ẹ̀dó languages feature euphemisms characterised by shared traits, yet they also exhibit distinct differences in composition and semantic features. In Yorùbá discourse, euphemisms often take the form of indirect references or metaphors, particularly when discussing sensitive subjects like sexuality, death, or social misconduct. Conversely, Ẹ̀dó speakers tend to employ more direct euphemistic expressions. Despite these differences, both cultures emphasise social hierarchy and respect, using euphemisms as a culturally sanctioned means to broach diverse topics delicately. both cultures prioritise social hierarchy and respect, and euphemisms provide a culturally accepted means of discreetly discussing diverse issues. Overall, This study highlights the significance of euphemisms in facilitating effective communication and nurturing interpersonal relationships within linguistically diverse communities. It enriches our understanding of how language choices reflect and uphold cultural norms, offering insights contributing to broader discussions on communication strategies and cultural sensitivity.

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Mots clés

Euphémisme, Politesse, Euphémisme en Yorùbá, Euphémisme en Ẹ̀dó, Sociolinguistique

Résumé

Les euphémismes sont un lubrifiant et un catalyseur essentiel pour la communication interpersonnelle, utilisés par les individus pour transmettre des messages complexes et peut-être provocateurs d'une manière plus placide et réfléchie. Ils jouent donc un rôle crucial dans les interactions sociales et les conversations quotidiennes. Cette étude examine les nuances socioculturelles qui influencent l'utilisation des euphémismes parmi les locuteurs du Yorùbá et d'Ẹ̀dó, ainsi que la manière dont les locuteurs utilisent le système de reformulation pour naviguer ou gérer des relations sociales complexes dans des environnements culturellement sensibles et maintenir l'harmonie au sein de leurs communautés. Cela part du fait qu'il n'existe aucune étude comparant la manière dont les euphémismes sont utilisés parmi les locuteurs de langues nigérianes, culturellement divers et différents, même s'il existe plusieurs études sur l'utilisation des euphémismes parmi les locuteurs de langues africaines et nigérianes. Nous utilisons un cadre éclectique, s'inspirant de la théorie de la politesse proposée par Brown et Levinson (1987) et de la théorie connotative du sens proposée par Trask (1999). Des données qualitatives ont été recueillies auprès de locuteurs natifs adultes d'Ẹ̀dó et du Yorùbá, enregistrées, transcrites et analysées thématiquement. Les résultats nous montrent que les euphémismes sont attestés en yorùbá et en Ẹ̀dó et présentent un certain nombre de caractéristiques communes. Il existe également des différences notables entre les euphémismes en yorùbá et en Ẹ̀dó à propos de la composition et des caractéristiques sémantiques, mais ils utilisent les euphémismes de manière similaire pour transmettre des messages avec beaucoup de tact et de la politesse. Cependant, les locuteurs du Yorùbá ont tendance à utiliser des références indirectes ou des métaphores lorsqu'ils abordent des sujets sensibles tels que les questions liées au sexe, à la mort et aux mauvaises manières. À l'inverse, les locuteurs d'Ẹ̀dó sont plus directs dans leurs expressions euphémistiques. Dans l'ensemble, les deux cultures donnent la priorité à la hiérarchie sociale et au respect, et les euphémismes constituent un moyen culturellement accepté de discuter discrètement de divers sujets. Dans l'ensemble, cette étude met en évidence les implications des euphémismes pour une communication et des relations interpersonnelles efficaces dans diverses communautés linguistiques.

1. Introduction

The Greek word *euphēmē*, which means "speaking well," is the source of the term euphemism. It emanated from a compounding process and concatenation of the constituents *eu*, which means "good, well," and *phēmē*, meaning "speech or speaking" (Holder, 2008, p. 65). The concept significantly shapes communication and social interactions, enabling individuals to convey difficult messages more politely and navigate sensitive topics or taboo expressions with tact in conversations that may otherwise be considered uncomfortable or provocative (Enright, 1985; Fromkin & Rodman, 2003; Akanbi, 2008). Therefore, various perspectives study it as an essential universal linguistic and cultural phenomenon. In sociolinguistics, the concept of euphemism is particularly

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evident and constitutes an interesting object of study (Leech, 1983; Allan & Burridge, 1991; Oyetade, 1994; Adebola, 2012; Chi & Hao, 2013; Wang, 2015; Jdetawy, 2019; Hua, 2020).

As described by Rawson (1981) and Linfoot-Ham (2005), euphemisms are powerful linguistic tools deeply embedded in our language, so much so that few of us, even those who pride themselves on being plainspoken, ever get through a day without using them. Euphemisms allow individuals to soften the blow of harsh truths, making communication more palatable and less confrontational. They serve as a way to show respect and sensitivity towards others, especially in delicate situations where emotions may run high. As reported by Yu (2018) and later corroborated by Uzdu (2021), all languages in the world use euphemisms because they help people achieve effective communication in their daily interactions, greatly avoid communication conflicts, and harmonize interpersonal relationships.

According to Xu (2007), it is both a lubricant and a catalyst for interpersonal communication. By using euphemisms, individuals can deliver difficult messages in a gentle and thoughtful manner. This allows for smoother interactions and prevents misunderstandings among interlocutors. Despite the abundance of euphemisms in African and Nigerian languages, there has been no comprehensive comparative analysis of this sociocultural phenomenon. Thus, given the paucity of studies examining the use of euphemisms among individuals from different cultures and speakers of different languages, particularly in Nigeria, this study examines the sociocultural factors that impact the use of euphemisms among Yorùbá and Ẹ̀dó speakers. The work particularly investigates how the speakers employ euphemisms to manage intricate social relationships, convey somewhat complex messages in culturally sensitive environments, and sustain harmony within their communities. Against the above backdrop, this study specifically looks at how the two culturally and linguistically different groups in Nigeria - the Yorubá and the Ẹ̀dó - use euphemistic phrases and compares them to see what they have in common and what makes them different based on the languages and cultural nuances of the speakers to further highlight the significance of euphemisms on effective communication and interpersonal relationships in diverse linguistic communities.

1.1 Yorùbá and Ẹ̀dó: A brief linguistic background

The Yorùbá people, according to Okediji (2008) and as reported by Ikotun et al (2023), primarily reside in southwestern Nigeria and some parts of Kogi and Kwara states of North Central Nigeria. They are also found in other countries like Benin Republic, Togo, Sierra Leone, Cuba, and Brazil. They speak Yorùbá, a Niger-Congo language classified under the Yoruboid subgroup (Greenberg, 1963; Afolabi & Igboanusi, 2023). The language is tonal and known for its extensive use of proverbs, idioms, and euphemisms reflecting the depth of the speakers' tradition, culture and distinctive use of honorifics and respectful forms of address (Adebola, 2012). They are descendants of Oduduwa. On the other hand, Ẹ̀dó, often referred to as Bini, is an Edoid language, a branch

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of the larger Niger-Congo language family (Elugbe, 1986; Greenberg, 1963). The Ẹ̀dó people primarily inhabit the southern region of Nigeria, particularly in Edo State (Edoja et al, 2005). Their language, just like Yorùbá, is a tone language and is also known for its distinctive use of respectful forms of address. Furthermore, the Ẹ̀dó people have a rich cultural history, including the ancient Benin Empire, which produced remarkable artistic works and a unique hierarchical societal structure.

In a report by Dimeji (2016), the paramount leader of all the monarchs in Yorùbáland, Ooni of Ife, was cited saying that Benin Kingdom remained part and parcel of Oduduwa House, based on historical evidence detailing the Oduduwa lineage but Benin Kingdom countered the claim and insisted instead that there is no basis for such classification. However, linguistically, across the two regions and within their different sub-domains of language use, euphemism is used and there is no controversy that it reflects the virtues and values of the societies and speakers of the languages (Hua, 2020). In addition, Awobuluyi (1978) reported that Yorùbá has twenty-five (25) letters of the alphabet divided into eighteen (18) consonant sounds and seven (7) vowel sounds. However, he did not account for the five nasal vowels attested in the language. On the other hand, Ẹ̀dó has thirty-nine (39) letters of the alphabet. They are divided into twenty-seven (27) consonant sounds and twelve (12) vowel sounds (Ọmọzuwa, 2010).

2. Previous Studies on Euphemism

Several studies have examined the use of euphemisms across different languages and cultures. Such studies include Adeyanju (2001), Fernandez (2006), Omoregie (2008), Qadi (2009), Samoskaite (2011), Nwanambuyu (2011), Saka (2011), Xiao-yan (2014), Xin (2015), Ayigun (2018), Jdetawy (2019), Terfa et al. (2022), and Rongqian (2022). Adeyanju (2001), for instance, examined the use of euphemisms in Nigerian English with a focus on the concept among educated Nigerian English speakers from a sociolinguistic perspective, using Dell Hyme's ethnography of communication as a model of analysis. The study's findings revealed that people in Nigeria shape English to conform to their interactional norms, including the expression of euphemism and politeness. The study also demonstrated that euphemisms are not only necessary but also serve to safeguard the integrity of both speakers and listeners. Conclusively, the work demonstrated that euphemisms have serious pedagogical implications for the teaching of English in Nigeria.

Saka (2011) studied the types of euphemisms employed by students of the Department of English and Literary Studies, Almadu Bello University, Zaria, Kaduna State, Nigeria, during conversations from a sociolinguistic perspective. He used the Sapir-Whorfian hypothesis as a framework for analysis, specifically focusing on linguistic relativity. According to the study, the students preferred the phrase "making love" over "sexual intercourse" and also used the word "less privileged" as a euphemism in place of "poor." Furthermore, the study revealed that the students favour the term "brain disorder" over "mental illnesses," and they also employ the phrase "physically disabled" over "handicapped." For Xin (2015), the focus of the study is the possible violation of the

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cooperative principle in the use of euphemisms in English. The goal is to facilitate effective cross-cultural communication, acknowledging that linguistic rules and the communicative environment both constrain euphemism.

A more relevant study by Fernandez (2006) investigated the euphemistic use of language on mid-nineteenth-century obituary pages. The study viewed death as an enduring taboo that necessitates linguistic safeguards for discussion. The findings revealed that many of the metaphors rely on Christian beliefs that those who have died will enjoy a better life in heaven, and that religion inspires a positive view of death and a negative view of earthly life. Also, Qadi-Al (2009) surveyed euphemism from a sociolinguistic perspective by comparing the use of euphemisms in English and Arabic.

The study demonstrated the negative usage of most euphemisms in both languages. More generally, Mwanambuyu (2011) used a socio-pragmatic perspective to examine euphemisms in Silozi, a Bantu language primarily spoken in Zambia. The study revealed that a wide range of relationships and age groups use Silozi euphemisms, with elders using them more frequently than the younger generation. The study argued that the social distance between participants, their social status, age, occupation, gender, and influence shape the use and formation of euphemisms and euphemistic expressions in the language. On their part, Terfa et al. (2022) examined euphemism as a communication vehicle in the Tiv language and literature. They observed that euphemisms have phrasal or idiomatic meanings, beautify or spice up daily communication. Rongqian (2022) carried out a comparative study of English and Chinese euphemisms from a cross-cultural perspective. He identified the similarities and differences between the two languages from a cross-cultural standpoint, as well as how understanding euphemism in each language can foster cross-cultural communication in the economies of China and the West.

A study on euphemisms in Yorùbá, done by Ayigun (2018) examined a pragmatic analysis of selected Yorùbá euphemisms. Her findings revealed that a large number of Yorùbá speakers, who belong to the younger age group of 20–35, have little or no understanding at all of the use of euphemisms in Yorùbá language; thus, they do not use them in conversations. The study also revealed that speakers use selected euphemistic expressions to perform assertive acts, both directly and indirectly, by projecting their intended meaning during conversations. Also, Omoregie (2008) examined taboo and euphemistic expressions in Ẹ̀dó with a focus on gender disparity. She noted that males, especially adults, tend to use certain taboos and euphemistic expressions in the Ẹ̀dó language more than females, potentially leading to a gender disparity among women.

Only Qadi-Al (2009) and Rongqian (2022) examined the use of euphemisms from cross-cultural and sociolinguistic perspectives, with a focus on English and Chinese and English and Arabic. However, none of the examined papers or other known literature compared the use of euphemism in Nigerian languages, in particular Yorùbá and Ẹ̀dó, which are two major regional languages in the country. This is the gap this study intends to fill. It intends to investigate the use of euphemism in Yorùbá and Ẹ̀dó, with a specific

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focus on the similarities and differences, as well as the classification, features, and functions of the concept in both languages.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study employs an eclectic theoretical framework by drawing insights from Politeness Theory as put forward by Brown and Levinson (1987) and the Connotative Theory of Meaning as propounded by Trask (1999). The Connotative Theory of Meaning is a linguistic and semantic theory that focuses on the associated meanings or connotations that words or expressions may carry beyond their primary, literal meanings. This theory suggests that words not only have their explicit, denotative meanings but also carry various connotations, which can be emotional, cultural, or subjective. The politeness principle is predicated on showing awareness of another person's public self-image or the awareness of others' expectations that their public self-image will be respected (Crespo 2005). The analytical tools were combined because the examined euphemistic expressions are rooted in both politeness and non-literal meanings.

3. Methodology

The data for this study were collected from responses given by twenty-five (25) participants who were adult native speakers of Yorùbá and Ẹ̀dó languages. The participants were both male and female, educated adults, between the ages of twenty-five and sixty. They cut across the three major religions in Nigeria, namely Christianity, Islam, and Traditional religion. The Yorùbá participants are from Onàdo, Ọ̀ṣun, Ọ̀yọ́, Èkìtì, and Ògùn states while the Ẹ̀dó participants are from Oredo, Egor, Ikpoba-Okha, Ovia South-West, Ovia North-East, Uhunmwonde, and Orrhionmwon areas of Edo State. The interactions were done in two parts. There were oral interviews in which the researchers provided some familiar English words or expressions and required the respondents to produce euphemisms for such words or expressions in Ẹ̀dó or Yorùbá as the case may be. These were recorded and subsequently subjected to thematic analysis. There was also the Word and Sentence Compilation Task in a questionnaire format administered to the participants.

4. Results and Discussion

In this section, the assembled data are systematically presented with emphasis on their classification, features, and functions. The Yorùbá name for euphemism is 'àdàsọ'. According to Ayigun (2018), euphemism is used in Yorùbá to teach morals and culture. Experience and age are crucial factors that determine someone's knowledge and mastery of euphemistic expressions. The name given to euphemism in Ẹ̀dó is known as Uhunmwum. Ẹ̀dó euphemisms are used to avoid committing taboos mostly using ethnography of speaking which is an aspect of Sociolinguistics (Oheabhi, 2012:1). Among speakers of the languages, it is said that the closer a child is to an elder or a competent speaker, the better chances he/she stands in understanding the use as well as the relevance of euphemistic expressions. In the following paragraphs, how the two culturally and

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linguistically different groups use euphemistic phrases is examined and compared to see what they have in common and what makes them different based on the languages and cultural nuances of the speakers in the diverse linguistic communities.

4.1 Features and Classification of Euphemisms in Yorùbá

Euphemisms in Yorùbá are formed primarily using rhetorical devices, which are techniques and language tools used to enhance or persuade an audience in spoken or written communication. Examples include metaphors, personification, metonymy, synecdoche, and idioms. According to Adewoyin (2014), the Yorùbá language is rich in euphemisms, and the expressions are classified based on the context of use and their connotative meaning. These euphemisms are grouped into different classes, but the most commonly used ones are highlighted in this work. They include:

4.1.1. Euphemisms associated with Sex, Sex Organs and Conception

There are various names for sex or sexual acts, the parts of the body involved in the act, and the result of the sexual act in Yorùbá that are not to be stated explicitly but rather expressed with euphemisms. Examples are given below:

1. Wo abẹ́ rẹ̀ wò
   Look under Poss-Pro look
   "To have sex with a girl"

2. Gbádùn ẹran tútù
   Enjoy meat cold
   "To have sex"

3. Gbọ́n omi sí mojò
   Pour water into somebody's chamber
   "To have sex"

4. Já ìbálé
   Tear virginity
   "To deflower a lady"

5. Ṣe eré súnkun sí
   Do play draw-mucous to
   "To have sex"

6. Nǹkan ọmọkùnrin
   Something child-male
   "Penis"

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7. Ó fẹ́ra kù
   Pron. love-body left
   "To be pregnant"

4.1.2. Euphemisms associated with Impotence and Silly

Several euphemisms are used to describe the state of being impotent and irrational. Below are examples:

8. Akọ ìbẹ́pẹ
   Male pawpaw
   "Impotent man"

9. Ẹṣin inú ìwé
   Horse inside book
   "Impotent man"
10. Ọ̀gá Adé
    Master name
    "A foolish person"

11. Gba ẹ̀wù dání (Gbẹ̀wùdání)
    Receive dress hold-on to
    "A foolish person (a dunce)"

4.1.3. Euphemisms associated with Death

Euphemisms are commonly used to describe death or the state of being dead in Yorùbá. The word "death" is considered scary and frightening among the people. Besides, it is also held that traditional rulers or monarchs do not die but simply transition to the great beyond. Therefore, mild words are used instead of the word "death".

12. Tẹ́rí gba aṣọ
    Spread-head receive cloth
    "To die"

13. Wọ àjà (wàjà)
    Enter ceiling
    "To die"

14. Ilẹ bàjẹ́
    Ground spoil
    "The king is dead

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15. Re ìwàlẹ̀ àṣà
    Go background culture
    "To die"

16. Agbè fọ́, omi kò dànù
    Gourd brake, water NEG spill
    "The mother died but the baby survived"

17. Pa ipò dà
    Change position turn
    "To die"

18. Ọlọ́jọ́ ti dé
    Owner of the day COMPL come
    "To die"

19. Bàbá re ilé
    Father go home
    "Father is dead"

20. Erin wo, àjànàkú sùn bí òkè
    Elephant fall, elephant sleep like hill
    "A warrior has died"

It is important to note that the euphemistic expression in (13) above: "Wọ àjà (*wájà*)" is strictly used when a king dies and not for any other person who dies in a Yorùbá society. In the euphemistic expression in (16) above, the word "Agbè" is metaphorically used to refer to the deceased mother whereas "omi" is a metaphor for the survived baby. Also, the euphemistic expression in (20) above, "àjànàkú and "erin" mean the same thing – elephant.

4.1.4. Euphemisms associated with bad Conduct and Behaviour

Some forms of behaviour are not socially acceptable and there are subtle ways of referring to them without making the people in reference feel worthless. Most times, they serve as a source of warning to those who engage in such behaviour. Examples are given below:

21. Fẹ́ ọwọ́
    Blow hand
    "To steal"

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22. Ṣe àfi ọwọ́ rá (ṣe àfọwọ́rá)
    Do act-of hand disappear
    "To steal"

4.1.5. Euphemisms associated with Professions or Occupations

There are certain words that are used for certain professions, which cannot be expressly stated or mentioned in public. Consider the examples below:

23. Oní gbàjámọ̀
    Owner gbàjámọ̀
    "A barber"

24. Gbé ilé (Gbele) pawó
    Live-house make money
    "A prostitute"

25. Olówò nọ̀ọ̀bì
    Owner of business unclean business
    "A prostitute"

4.1.6. Euphemisms associated with Biological/Organ functions

Bodily functions include flatulence (farting), menstruation, urination and defecation. Two of the activities: to urinate "tọ̀" and to defecate (empty one's bowel) "yàgbẹ̀"/"ṣu" (a dialectal variation) are often euphemised most especially when talking in public (Adeoye 2010). It is believed that such words, if not reworded, can bring about irritation especially if the listeners or hearers are eating when the expression is literarily produced. Menstruation, which is the monthly flow of a woman, is also euphemized. Flatulence otherwise known as farting can also be euphemized accordingly. The following are commonly used euphemisms to indirectly communicate the circumstances:

26. Ṣe ẹ̀yọ́
    Do sieve
    "To urinate"

27. Yọ́ omi lórí màjèṣí
    Sieve water on-head infant
    "To urinate"

28. Jáwé jẹ́ n jẹ̀ẹ́mîì
    Pluck-leaf let me eat-another
    "To defecate"

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29. Gbọn ẹsẹ̀ (gbọnsẹ̀)
    Shake leg
    "To defecate"

30. Ṣe nǹkan oṣù
    Do thing month
    "To menstruate"

31. Ara fúyẹ́
    Body light
    "To fart"

Examples 1–31 above detailed six classifications of euphemistic expressions in Yorùbá and demonstrated why they are used instead of the socially and culturally stigmatised forms that the euphemistic expressions individually denote. In the following section, types, features as well as the attested euphemisms in Ẹ̀dó are highlighted and discussed.

4.2 Features and Classification of Euphemisms in Ẹ̀dó

Euphemisms in Ẹ̀dó are formed majorly using rhetoric devices which are techniques and language tools used to enhance or persuade an audience in spoken or written communication. These rhetorical devices make euphemisms in Ẹ̀dó language unique. Examples include metaphors, idiomatic expressions, synecdoche, hyperbole, and understatement. Omoregie (2018) stated that Ẹ̀dó, like most African languages, is rich in euphemisms and that the euphemisms are classified based on the context of use and their connotative meanings. These euphemisms are grouped into different classes but the most commonly used ones are discussed in this paper.

4.2.1. Euphemisms associated with Death

Death is a phenomenon that is dreaded in every society and it elicits certain reactions. Just like in Yorùbá, euphemisms are also used to express death in Ẹ̀dó language. Examples are given below:

32. Erha Ọ̀zọ́ rhié òbó né ọ́ fu yàn ègbé
    Father Ozo take the hand that it gentle on the body
    "Ozo's father is dead"

33. Òsaze ze ukpọ́n òbọ́
    Òsaze leave cloth hand
    "Òsaze is dead"

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4.2.2. Euphemisms associated with Sex, Sex Organs and Conception

Sex-related issues and body parts are not referred to directly in Ẹ̀dó language. They elicit certain reactions from the hearers. Hence, the expressions are reworded and realised as seen in the following examples:

34. Èmwí nwé tọlò mwé
    Thing my scratch me
    "My vagina is itching me"

35. I gù ọvbọ̀khán mwẹ́ lovbié
    I help wife my sleep
    "I had sex with my wife"

36. Ùkí gbèrrá Ekí
    Month pass Eki
    "Eki is pregnant"

4.2.3. Euphemisms associated with bad Conduct and Behaviour

Some conduct and forms of behaviour that can trigger displeasure are also expressed with euphemisms. Examples are as follows:

37. Ovbòkhàn nà má gbé ùyìnmwé ẹ̀ré gbà
    Child this good very character his incorrect
    "This child is mannerless"

38. Yé àrò ènòwánrén ghè èré
    Use eye old look him
    "He is childish"

39. Gù mwé rrié èvbàré ọ kpé sẹ́ ùrhùabọ́
    Help me eat food he wash reach hands off his neck
    "To overstep one's boundary"

4.2.4. Euphemisms associated with Illness

In Ẹ̀dó, illness is something that brings a feeling of sadness, thus, euphemisms are also used to express different illnesses to make them mild. Examples are as follows:

40. Ìdádá rhọ̀ọ́ èrhàn
    Ìdádá pick wood
    "Ìdádá is mad"

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41. Imádé khoumwi èmwi rré égbékèn
Imádé sick something on wall
"Imádé has leprosy"

4.2.5. Euphemisms associated with Exhortation

In Ẹ̀dó, some euphemisms are used for exhortation or praise. Examples are as follows:

42. Éhíén Ẹ̀dó kánmwá ùzá ọ́ zẹ́
Pepper Benin small damage it causes
"Small but mighty"

43. À í yẹ́ akpolọ́ mú ẹ́milá yé Ẹ̀dó
You not use a large carry cow to Benin
"Strength is not determined by size"

In the next section, a comparison of the types of common euphemisms attested in both languages as highlighted above are compared to establish their similarities and differences with a focus on the socio-cultural factors encouraging their use in both languages.

4.3 Euphemisms in Yorùbá and Ẹ̀dó: The Nexus

There are many similarities in the composition of Yorùbá and Ẹ̀dó euphemisms, as reflected in the fact that both apply rhetorical devices that include understatement (litotes), exaggeration, and synecdoche. One can rightly infer that the usage of euphemisms in Ẹ̀dó and Yorùbá in terms of scope is similar. In the areas of death, sex, bodily functions, and illness, euphemisms play a significant role. Both cultures view death as a source of fear and sadness, yet they recognise it as a necessary end for all mortals and a reality that demands acceptance. This leads to the use of various euphemisms when discussing death.

The same thing goes for sex and illnesses. Both cultures view sex as a private matter that requires discreet discussion. Hence, they employ different euphemisms while discussing the topics. Based on the examined data, specific roles of euphemisms in Yòrubá and Ẹ̀dó are identified and discussed as follows:

- Taboo circumvention functions: This is the foremost and direct function of euphemisms in Yòrubá and Ẹ̀dó. Most euphemisms arise from linguistic taboos. Both Yòrubá and Ẹ̀dó euphemisms play an important role in avoiding taboos or harsh realities such as death, illness, sexual matters, and private organs of the human body.

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- Politeness functions: Politeness is a hallmark of human development and civilization. The two languages attest to this by employing euphemisms to show politeness, modesty, and civility while navigating sensitive topics.

- Vulgarity-eluding functions: This is sometimes known as the function of elegance. The use of euphemisms while discussing bad conduct or behaviour and dishonest professions all point to this phenomenon.

- Masking function: This is commonly referred to as the disguise or deception function. According to the discussed data, the two languages use euphemisms to cover up certain actions.

- Comic function: Euphemisms can enhance the humorous effect of discourse and make language interesting. For this purpose, the two languages use euphemisms in abundance.

4.3.1. Features of Yorùbá and Ẹ̀dó Euphemisms

Yorùbá and Ẹ̀dó euphemisms are characterised by several features that make them distinct, unique, and culturally significant. They frequently employ metaphorical language converting sensitive or taboo subjects to more acceptable or neutral concepts. They allow for indirect communication, making it possible to discuss sensitive topics without being too explicit. Additional features of Yorùbá and Ẹ̀dó euphemisms are also identified and highlighted as follows:

Euphemisms are used in Yorùbá and Ẹ̀dó to show respect to individuals, especially in addressing sensitive and harsh topics like death or illness. Euphemisms in Yorùbá and Ẹ̀dó contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage and knowledge. Yorùbá and Ẹ̀dó euphemisms are culture-specific. The choice of euphemism can depend on factors such as the relationship between speakers, the formality of the situation, and the topic being discussed. Yorùbá and Ẹ̀dó euphemisms help to avoid violating cultural taboos by providing alternative, less offensive ways to refer to subjects that are considered sensitive or inappropriate to address directly. Yorùbá and Ẹ̀dó euphemisms cushion the emotional impact of difficult or painful topics, making it easier for individuals to discuss and process their emotions. Euphemisms in Yorùbá and Ẹ̀dó foster a sense of inclusivity and identity among their people. Yorùbá and Ẹ̀dó euphemisms often have a poetic and artistic quality in them, making them more than just linguistic tools; they are also cultural expressions.

Meanwhile, even though euphemisms are attested in Yorùbá and Ẹ̀dó and have shared features, there are also some noticeable differences between Yorùbá and Ẹ̀dó euphemisms. Linguistic features, cultures, and cross-cultural communication all reveal these differences. In terms of structure, Yorùbá and Ẹ̀dó are two languages with different structures. Specifically, Yorùbá is a Niger-Congo language, while Ẹ̀dó is a branch of the Edoid family. These structural differences shape the constructions of euphemisms. In

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terms of history and origin, Yorùbá and Ẹ̀dó cultures have distinct historical origins, which may result in variations in the euphemisms used. The historical context influences the euphemisms tied to specific events or experiences. Also, Yorùbá and Ẹ̀dó have different belief systems, religions, and traditions. These play an important role in shaping the euphemisms related to birth, marriage, and other significant life events, as evidenced by the euphemistic expressions in both languages. It is quite noticeable that Yorùbá and Ẹ̀dó cultures have their taboos and customs, which necessitate the use of euphemisms to discuss sensitive topics. Often, the euphemisms created reflect these cultural norms. Meanwhile, one question that has not been addressed in this paper is: are there other Nigerian languages with the unique principles or shared features attested in the examined languages as well as the parameters or differences observed in the data set? The answer to this can be the focus of another study.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This work is a sociolinguistic investigation of euphemisms in Yorùbá and Ẹ̀dó. It investigates the intricate sociocultural aspects of language use in Yorùbá and Ẹ̀dó, shedding light on the diverse and profound ways in which euphemisms are used. The study demonstrates that euphemisms, deeply rooted in tradition and cultural nuances, play essential roles in maintaining social harmony and effective communication in the two languages. The study highlights similar and different features shared by Yorùbá and Ẹ̀dó euphemisms, such as their metaphorical usage and indirect communication. People specifically use them for taboo circumvention, politeness, vulgarity-elusion, and masking. Importantly, Yorùbá is mostly indirect, while Ẹ̀dó is sometimes direct. But, in all, euphemisms in the two languages reflect distinct historical, religious, and traditional influences. Furthermore, both cultures note social hierarchy and respect, and euphemisms provide a culturally accepted means of discreetly discussing diverse topics. As the study's findings revealed, euphemisms in both languages largely serve as vital tools for indirect communication, politeness, and respect, and they play an essential role in maintaining social harmony and effective communication. This knowledge is valuable for researchers, linguists, and individuals seeking to engage with or appreciate the richness of the languages.

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Acknowledgements
We sincerely appreciate Dr. Sikiru A. Ogundokun from the Department of French at Osun State University for his invaluable assistance and support in translating the abstract from English to French.

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Authors' contributions
The authors divided the study into components and developed it accordingly. Pr. *Ikotun* and *Afolabi* handled the introduction and literature review parts. *Olowo* contributed to the data collection and discussion. The final draft, editing, and proofreading of the article were collectively handled.

Declaration of conflicting interest
The authors declared no conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of the article.

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Available online online at https://www.asjp.cerist.dz/en/Articles/155