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Evaluation of grammatical properties of proverbial personal names in Dagbani

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Abstract

The study examined grammatical properties of proverbial personal names in Dagbani. The study utilized a qualitative research design, which is descriptive in nature. The target population for this research was participants from Dagbani speaking communities in Northern region. Specifically, Sagnarigu community, a suburb of Tamale was selected as the accessible community to carry out the study. The sample population was made up of six (6) teachers from Bagabaga Annex primary school consisting three (3) males and three (3) females. Another four (4) participants two (2) each from the Bimbilla and Wulensi and then six (6) from Sanarigu community who were parents of pupils with personal names in Dagbani identified from the school's register were also consulted. Documentation and interviews were used as data collection instruments. Proverbial personal names were analysed in relation to sentence structure and function. The names were analysed into simple and compound sentences which function as interrogatives, imperatives and declaratives or statements. The study shows that the constituents of some Dagbani proverbial personal names are made up of different grammatical categories, such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs.

Keywords: Dagbani, grammatical categories, sentence structure, simple sentences, verbs.

Public Interest Statement
The study of personal names remains an important area for scholars and authors in different fields such as sociology, linguistics, anthropology and so on. In most cultures, names are not only crucial in expressing local traditions but also the expectations, faith, social relations, status in society and worldview of the people. Among the Dagbamba, names serve as a medium of communication and a record of information. The study will be of great significance to Ghanaian language students from the lower to higher levels. Finally, the study contribute to our knowledge of language structures as expressed in the proverbial names of the Dagbamba.

1. Introduction

The significance of names in African societies cannot be over emphasised. In every society, when a new baby is born, she or he is given a name as an identity. Traditionally, this serves as a sign of welcome thereby accepting the individual into the society or the family in particular. By this means, the individual is also welcomed to the physical world from the spiritual world. In most African societies and the Dagbamba in particular, it is believed that before an individual comes into this physical world he or she might have lived in the spiritual world. Thereafter, he or she embarks on a journey from the spiritual world to the physical world. The individual arrives as a stranger and therefore must be welcomed by being given a name to become part of the family. Apart from the general knowledge of this practice among Africans, there are few exceptions in different societies and cultures. In the Dagbamba society for instance, when a child is born to a family, she or he is named as *Sani* 'a stranger' or more specifically as *Saandoo* or *Saampaɣa*, meaning a 'male' or 'female stranger' respectively. This name lasts for a week or until a name is bestowed on him or her. Culturally, the Dagbamba name their children in order to know, differentiate and express their experiences about issues and circumstances surrounding them. These issues, experiences and circumstances are related to different life situations in the life of the individual, the family or the entire society. It could reflect the circumstances surrounding conception and birth of a child, either in a positive or negative perspective or the life experience of the parents.

The Dagbamba are one of the ethnic groups in northern Ghana and Dagbani is the name of the language spoken by the Dagbamba. There are three distinct varieties of the language: the western dialect (Tomosili) which is spoken in and around Tamale, the administrative capital of the northern region; the eastern dialect (Nayahili), which is spoken in Yendi, the traditional capital of Dagbɔŋ and its environs and; Nanuni, the southern dialect spoken in and around Bimbilla. The land occupied by the Dagbamba is called Dagbɔŋ. The overlord of the Dagbɔŋ Traditional Kingdom is the Yaa Naa, whose court and administrative capital is located in Yendi. Dagbani is one of the Mabia languages, classified previously as the Gur language family, a component of the Niger-Congo language family spoken in the northern part of Ghana (Bodomo, 1996). The term Mabia, which means 'my brother/my sister' is a compound word consisting of *Ma* 'mother' and *bia* 'child'. This is a word known and used by almost all the language groups in northern Ghana.

The Dagbamba see their names as a means of preserving their language and cultural heritage. This is because names given to individuals come from the language with which the individuals are identified. With the language, the meaning of the name is communicated to the people. Like other African languages, the Dagbamba express the oral art forms of their language through the names they give to their children. Among the oral art forms through which the people express their language are proverbs, appellations, songs, libation text and so on. In communicating their life experiences and wisdom to others, the Dagbamba use proverbs which give birth to the existence of proverbial names in the culture.

2. Literature Review
The concept of name

Several studies have been carried out on personal names from different cultures in different perspectives. These studies, in one way or the other, provide information about different ethnic groups and their naming systems, the linguistic complexity, meaning and aesthetics

of some languages, while others reveal and showcase the relevance and beauty of different cultures both in the Western and African settings as espoused through personal names. Some of these studies that are based on names provide explanations or definitions of the concept of name that best suit their areas of study. The study of name and naming systems is not for mere identification purposes but an important sociocultural practice in African societies. The processes involved in giving a name to a child and the act of naming in the African society is observed with much importance and respect (Mutunda, 2016: 75).

Generally, names form part of the means by which Africans express their traditions and cultures. In African societies, names are thus used to express expectations, experiences, beliefs and worldview of the people. It serves as a medium of communication and a record of information to the society. According to Sarpong (1974: 88), names indicate the clan or origin of a person. They reveal some historical events and the status or position of a man. He explains further that the meaning of names of the Akans, etymologically, are very clear such that there is no need for any further elaboration on a name when mentioned in the society.

Mutunda (2016: 75) sees name as a message the name-giver conveys to society through the name bearer. He likens name to a document where the history, culture and heritage of the individual or a family can be read in time and space. In effect, name serves as a means of giving information about a people or society. As part of the motives behind name giving among the Dagbamba, names are used to convey messages of an individual's experience, thought, expectation, worry, etc. to the society. They also consider name as a means of preserving their cultural values, morals, and practices in the society. The Dagbamba use name to warn, advise and express regret in life. In Dagbamba tradition, when a child is named *Sugri*, for instance, it is one way of manifesting the culture. This type of name seeks to inform the society about the status of the name giver, a chief. It indicates that the name giver, possible the father, is a chief and the child is the first born to the father after ascending to that particular throne. Thus, in the Dagbamba tradition when a royal family member is crowned a king, the first born is usually named **Sugri**.

Adjah (2011: 3), citing Wegryn (2008) observes that "a name is of distinction, chosen, conferred and announced". Adjah (*ibid*) studied personal names and naming practice among the Southern ethnic groups in Ghana, namely; the Akan, Ewe and Gas. Indicating that though name is universal, the way they are given, reasons for choice of particular names and the rituals involved in naming, vary from society to society. In most African societies birth is seen as the beginning of the rites of passage which include birth, puberty, marriage, and death. These stages are marked and celebrated to acknowledge and show their importance in the life of people in the society. Thus, personal names serves as a rich source of information disseminated in both written and oral form. Agyekum (2006; 207) citing Rey (1995; 26) describes personal names from a logical and philosophical view point, indicating that a name refers to a different element of human experiences which designate an individual or collective entity, which it designates or denotes. With reference to this assertion, the Dagbamba also hold the view that it is important for every human being to have a name and a person's name is capable of determining his or her future. The sense of a name must be related to what is generally accepted as good and as the norm of the society. For this reason, the Dagbamba have a saying that *nira yuli n-diri o*. Literally, your name determine what you become in future or your name tells more about you. The Dagbamba belief that the name of a person determines his or her character or behaviour, expectation, temperament, thought,

future, etc. and your actions or otherwise. It also explains your relationship with others in the society. This explains the belief of the people that one need not choose a name that has bad connotation for a child, for the meaning of the name whether good or bad is capable of determining the achievement of the person in future.

The grammar of proverbs

The crucial aspect of proverbial personal names, especially of this study in Dagbani, is not about the historical, philosophical, traditional and or the religious interests, but of the structural construction of the names that reveal the syntax of the language (Dagbani). Arising from this, it is observed that Dagbamba indigenous personal names, particularly proverbial personal names, are normally expressed in sentences that vary in length and complexity; properties which make them appropriate data for this study. While acknowledging that the meaning of personal names may be understood and interpreted in the context of the culture of a people, another important issue is that, insufficient knowledge of the grammar of a language may be a major shortcoming to understanding the deep meaning of certain expressions of a language.

Mac Coinnigh (2015: 114) observes that proverbs may appear in different sentence types: simple, compound, complex and compound complex sentence types and notes that the most basic sentence type which is common to proverbs is the simple sentence type which contains one main clause without sub-clauses. They are basically simple, declarative, non-optional and do not contain many stylistic markers like parallelism, alliteration, personification, simile etc. Compound sentences have multiple independent clauses separated by a coordinator, such as 'and', nor, 'but', 'or', 'yet', etc. These coordinators create a kind of grammatical equality or balance between the two clauses in the sentence that brings about a semantic contrast in the syntactic pattern of the sentence. Compound-complex sentences on the other hand contain multiple clauses and sub-clauses and have very complicated syntactic patterns.

Hayes (2009:19) explains that phonology is interfaced with other components of the grammar, particularly morphology and syntax, and there are rules that govern how sound patterns reflect information that arise within the components of a language. The construction of names in any language does not occur just anyhow but is governed by the rules of word order of the language. It indicates the appropriate arrangement of words and the structures found in the construction of sentences, clauses, and phrases of the language. Huddleton (1984: 348-350) notes that a constituent analysis of sentences identifies their form and hierarchical arrangements. Thus, in a syntactic analysis, the grammatical categories or forms must be assigned syntactic classes and subclasses on the basis of various types of shared properties. A constituent is a string of words which share the same property in a group. This means that the structure of a phrase which consists of one or more constituents must show the order that defines a particular language.

A morpho-syntactic theory of proverbial personal names

According to Batoma (2006; 2), "names are given in particular languages whose morphology, syntax and semantics inform their meaning to a great extent. This meaning is the linguistic meaning of names which is also known as literal or motivated meaning".

Heine and Nurse (2000) explain that in the study of syntax we are concerned with how words and morphemes combine to form grammatical sentences. How words are grouped

into larger patterns or units to form phrases and clauses and how those units relate to one another to form a hierarchy of structures. They also note that such structures do not exist in a vacuum or in isolation, but are used in a social context to convey meaning and communicate messages. This implies that in an attempt to discuss the meaning of personal names in Dagbani, one needs to study the various structures that a name is composed of, in terms of their constituent words, prefixes and suffixes. One also needs to study the rules that govern the combination of morphemes, words, phrases and sentences which form the higher level of grammatical structures.

A syntactic study of proverbial personal names in Dagbani involves studying the morphology and syntax of the language. It also has to do with the phonology of the language. These components are very important in the study of every language and for that matter, they play a very significant role in analysing the constituent structure of personal names in Dagbani. The interaction between morphology and syntax can also be realised in the construction of personal names, by the words involved, their arrangements and relationships. These words and their arrangements contribute largely to determining the meaning ascribed to names and other expressions in the language. A language understanding program must have considerable knowledge about the meaning of words and how they contribute to the meaning of sentences and to the context within which they are being used. It is also clear that the structure of a language includes the words, the functions they play in a sentence, and how they combine into phrases and sentences (Ali & Hoque 2003). Similarly, in personal names, cognizance must be given to the basic linguistic units of the language. These basic linguistic units include phonemes, morphemes, and the grammatical categories of the language which form the building blocks or basic units of language and facilitate pronunciation, interpretation and an understanding of the meaning of the names of a people.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research population
The target population for this research was participants from Dagbani speaking communities in Northern region. Specifically, Sagnarigu community, a suburb of Tamale was selected as the accessible community to carry out the study. However, participants from Bimbilla and Wulensi which form the Eastern dialect of the language were also considered to ascertain the dialectal differences of names that may arise between the Western and Eastern speakers of Dagbani. These communities were selected on the grounds that they are typical Dagbani speaking communities where data on personal names in the language could be obtained. Therefore, the sample population was drawn from across the Western and Eastern speakers of Dagbani. The sample population was made up of six (6) teachers from Bagabaga Annex primary school consisting three (3) males and three (3) females. Another four (4) participants two (2) each from the Bimbilla and Wulensi and then six (6) from Sanarigu community who were parents of pupils with personal names in Dagbani identified from the school's register were also consulted. Among this groups were three (3) retired teachers who had taught the language for many years. This gave a total number of ten (16) participants.

3.2 Research design
In order to obtain appropriate information for this study, a qualitative research design, which is descriptive in nature, was adopted. Fraenkel and Wallen (2003: 430-432) say that a

descriptive study is a type of qualitative research whose emphasis is on describing into detail what goes on in a particular situation, event or activity. The descriptive design, which is a type of qualitative research, was considered necessary since the study involves the documentation and description of the syntactic properties of proverbial personal names in Dagbani. The names are described according to their form and structure as well as their functions.

3.3 Research instruments

In the process of collecting data for the study, documentation and interviews were used as data collection instruments. Names were collected from registers of Bagabaga Annex Primary School, offices of the Electoral Commission, and selected written materials (literature books written in Dagbani). The registers of three (3) classes, Primary 1 to 3 were selected from the school. Documentation in this study took the form of writing names from the various institutions and materials selected. In some cases note taking was employed, especially, where the researcher chanced on a new name in the language for the first time.

3.4 Data analysis

In considering the basic word system of Dagbani, proverbial personal names are analysed in relation to sentence structure and function. The names are analysed into simple and compound sentences which function as interrogatives, imperatives and declaratives or statements.

4. Results and discussion

Dagbani morphology

In the study of Dagbani morphology, Olawsky (1999: 22) notes that words in Dagbani particularly nouns and verbs can simply be distinguished by their morphological structure. Besides, a syntactic distinction can also be made by their occurrence in a sentence. Verbs occur in different contexts as compared to other words. In Dagbani, words such as verbs for instance often occur together with preverbal elements which indicate tense and post verbal elements which indicate aspect. Nouns on the other hand often occur as either subjects or objects in sentences.

Hudu (2014: 6) classifies Dagbani words into three forms namely: simplex, complex and compound words. He refers to the simplex word as consisting of only one lexical root. For instance, the structure of a verbal root in a simplex word form could be as short as CV or CVC without an affix. However, the simplex verb may also be inflected to mark aspect (perfective or imperfective). Some examples of the simplex verb root in Dagbani are illustrated in example (1) below with their aspectual markers:

1. Verb root   Inflection
   a) *ti*   'give'   *ti-ya*   'give'   perfective
   b) *yi*   'go out'   *yi-ra*   'go out'   imperfective
   c) *wum* 'to listen/hear' *wum-ya* 'listen'   perfective
                                              (Hudu 2014: 6)

As regards the morphological structure of nouns and adjectives, Hudu (2014) and Olawsky (1999) explain that a simplex noun or adjective consists of a lexical root and a number suffix bound to each other. They observe that in Dagbani the smallest free-standing unit of a noun

or adjective is a lexical root inflected with a singular or plural suffix. This implies that Dagbani nominals and adjectives are normally marked with singular or plural suffixes in their root form. However, complex words are made up of more than one lexical root inflected with only one number suffix. In complex words, only the final root is followed by a number suffix. Olawsky (1999: 75) adds that complex nouns are extended forms of simple roots which can be divided or separated. They consist of more than one root as in compounds. Hudu (2014) notes that complex words may undergo phonological processes resulting from the suffixation of the number. This implies that there could be deletion or assimilation processes in complex and compound words.

Structure of the Mabia language

In terms of word order system, Bodomo (1996: 6) notes that the syntactic structure of the Mabia language group of the Niger-Congo family is SVO - subject verb object. In this sequence, noun phrases which function as subjects normally precede verb phrases, and another noun phrase which also functions as the object follows the verb phrase in a sentence. By way of confirming this basic word order in the Mabia language group, Bodomo (1996) uses examples from six Mabia languages to illustrate the syntactic structure in simple declarative statements. In the case of this study, three of the Mabia languages are considered in example (2) as follows:

(2)a. *Dery*   *nyu*   *la*   *kuo*   **Dagaare**
      S   V   O
      Dery   drink a.m   water
      'Dery drank water'

   b. *Nindoo*   *ŋme*   *la*   *Ninpaga*   **Dagbani**
      S   V   O
      Nindoo   beat   a.m   Ninpaga
      'Nindoo beat Ninpaga'

   a. *Aduku*   *yin*   *ŋmi*   *ma*   **Gurunɛ**
      S   FUT   V   O
      Aduku   beat   me
      'Aduku will beat me'

                                                    (Bodomo 1996: 6)

These examples show the basic word order in simple declarative sentences of the Mabia language group. Olawsky (1999: 49) observes that this basic word order system is also expressed in secondary clauses such as transitive and causative clauses. He refers to the transitive clause as one in which nouns or pronouns occur at post-verbal position while the intransitive clause takes no objects (transitive and in transitive verbs). A causative clause is where certain morphemes like *-hi* in Dagbani are used to introduce an additional argument by shifting the subject of the original sentence into object position. Examples of causative sentences in Dagbani include:

(3)a. *O*   *kpe*   *duu*   →   *N*   *kpehi*   *o*   *duu*
       He/she enter   room   I   enter-CAUSE   him   r o o m

'He/she entered the room'   'I made him enter the room'

b. *O   du   tia*   →   *N   duhi   o   tia*
   He/she   climb a tree   I climb –CAUSE   him   a tree
   'He/she has climbed a tree'   'I made him climb a tree'

The above illustrate the structure of the causative sentences where the subject of the original sentence is shifted to the object position with the introduction of the causative morpheme *–hi*. The causative morpheme is usually attached to the verbal element in the sentence. The structure of the causative sentence is constructed based on the SVO word sequence. The structural elements of SVO in (3a) above are recategorized as the following in (3c):

c. *O   kpe   duu*   →   *N   kpe-hi o   duu*
   Subj   V   Obj   Subj   V   Obj1   Obj2
   'He /she enter room'   He /she made him enter room'

In this sentence, two objects are realised (direct and indirect objects) as a result of the introduction of the causative morpheme (*-hi/si*) which is considered a well-formed sentence in Dagbani.

Considering the kind of functions sentences perform in a language, Bodomo (1996) citing Naden (1988) adds that clause types can be transitive, intransitive, ditransitive, directive, stative, equative, demonstrative, etc. He notes that a more revealing way of talking about the structure and types of sentences of Mabia languages is to look at the argument structure and the inherent semantic properties of verbs occurring in a sentence, with particular attention to the word order system. He demonstrates the sentence structure with examples in Dagaare as seen in example (4) below:

(4)a. *O   ŋme   ma   la*
   She/he beat me   a.m
   'She/he has beaten me'

a. *O   ku   ma la gan*
   She/he gave me a.m book
   'She/he gave me a book'

(Bodomo 1993: 6)

This is explained by considering the nature of the verbs in the sentence. For instance, considering the nature of the verb 'beat' in (a), the sentence is realised as a transitive sentence as a result of the argument structure of the verb. The semantic properties of the verb indicates that the direct object of the verb 'beat' is the patient of the sentence. The sentence therefore performs a patient role. Similarly, the argument structure of the verb 'gave' in (b) indicates that it is a triadic or ditransitive verb due to the presence of the direct and indirect objects in the sentence.

Functions of the noun phrase

Andrews (2007: 132) considers noun phrases as having three different types of functions, namely; semantic, pragmatic and grammatical functions. The semantic and pragmatic functions deal with aspects of sentence meaning whereas the grammatical function deals with the structure aspect of sentence. Semantic function which is also known as semantic role, deals with the different ways in which a sentence can describe an entity. For example, consider the sentence in (5) below:

(5) The farmer kills the duckling.

The verb 'kill' in the sentence shows a situation where one entity kills the other. This provides two semantic roles, 'killer' and 'killed' which is observed by the NP before the verb and the NP after the verb, 'the farmer' and 'the duckling' respectively. He explains that the semantic function or role of a noun phrase deals with the relationship between sentences and the situations they refer to. It provides a further meaning concerning more than just what a sentence is about but how it contributes to determining when it may be used. The pragmatic function deals with the properties of a NP that relate the sentence to its contextual use. It involves the knowledge of the various features of the situation being talked about, the spatial and social relationship between the speaker and the hearer.

The grammatical function of a NP on the other hand has to do with the grammatical structure of a sentence which determines the semantic role and grammatical behaviour of NPs. This recognises the structural distribution of noun phrases in a sentence where they function as subject and object with intervening verbs. Bodomo, Abubakar and Che (2018: 10) note that grammatical functions are classified into argument functions and non-argument functions. Argument functions express a predicate and are grouped under core and non-core functions. The core functions are associated with central participants of the eventuality expressed by the verb. They include subject, direct and indirect object. Core functions are often realised as NPs/DPs in some languages (e.g. English and Kusaal), and normative or accusative case in languages that mark morphological case. Non-core functions on the other hand include complements, object oblique and adjunct. Functions of NPs as subject and object can be illustrated in Dagbani in example (6) as follows:

(6)a. *Tia*   *la*   *kuuya*
     S   DET   V
     tree   the   dried
     'The tree has dried'

  b. *Buhi*   *je*   *sakom*
     S   V   O
     goat   hate   rainwater
     'Goats hate   rain water'

  b. *Napari dala*   *bua*   *nimdi*
     S   V   Obj1   Obj2
     N   buy   goat   meat

'Napari bought goat   meat'

In (6a), the NP *tia la* functions as subject. It consists of a noun and a determiner *tia la* 'the tree'. (8b) has a bare noun *buhi* 'goats' as the subject of the NP preceding the verb and another NP *sakom* 'rain water' following the verb as the object of the sentence. The construction in (6c) shows the direct and indirect objects all represented by nouns.

Proverbial personal names with sentence function

According to Downing (2006: 180), sentence or clause types are syntactically distinguished by the presence or absence of subject and the ordering of subject and a finite verb. The finite verb is realised by a primary verb (am, is, are, was, were, has, etc), a modal verb (can, must, etc.) or a tensed lexical verb, as the first or only element of the verbal group. In English, the declarative, interrogative and imperative moods of a clause are distinguished syntactically by variation in one part of the clause, called the mood element, and the predicate. To demonstrate the structural variation of the various clause types with regards to the presence or absence of subject and ordering of the verb group, Downing (2006) summarises the structure of the various clause types in a table as seen below:

Table 1: Clause types

Clause type	Order	Example
Declarative	Subject + finite	Jane sings
Interrogative (yes/no)	Finite + subject	Does Jane sing?
Interrogative (wh-)	Wh + finite + subject	What does Jane sing?
Exclamative	Wh + subject + finite	How well Jane sings?
Imperative	No subject, base form of verb	Sing!

Downing (2006: 181)

Mac Coinnigh (2015: 115) also observes that sentences typically have four different functions: declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamatory, which can be drawn together into two larger main groups: the affirmative and the communicative. He classifies the declarative and interrogative as affirmative sentences and the imperative and exclamatory as communicative sentence types.

In the Mabia cluster, Atintono (2013: 149) presents a brief discussion on the syntactic structure or formation and functions of clause types in Gurenɛ, a cognate language closely of Dagbani. He identifies the declarative clause as the most common clause type in Gurenɛ which is used to make statements to convey information in a discourse. Structurally, the declarative clause is made up of a subject preceding the verb and its complement or adjunct. The declarative clause is used to tell the location of a figure or an object (subject) which precedes the positional verb followed by the locative positional phrase. Interrogatives on the other hand are used to seek information. In the language, interrogatives are made up of question words such as *beni* or *bem* 'what', 'why', ŋwani 'why', 'how much' bɛ 'where' etc which usually appear clause finally in Gurenɛ. Examples include the following in (7) below:

(7)   *Boole   la   boi   la   bɛ?*
        ball   DEF   exist   FOC   where?
        'Where is the ball?'   (Atintono, 2013: 149)

Atintono notes that imperative clauses in the Gurenɛ are of three types based on their syntax. These include imperatives expressed by bare verb stems without grammatical subject and imperatives expressed by second- or third-person pronouns together with the verb. The imperatives expressed by bare verb stems without grammatical subjects may sometimes not include grammatical objects in addition to subjects which are not overtly marked but are understood to be present. The third type of imperative has a causative verb followed by a complement preceding a third person plural pronoun. It is used to address a second person in order to cause a third party to act.

(8)   *Basɛ   ti   ba   kiŋɛ*
        let   COMP   3PL   go
        'Let them go!'

                                                    (Atintono, 2013: 150)

According to Miller (2002: 83) and Wiredu (1999: 41-46), declarative sentences are used to make statements or state a fact while imperative sentences issue commands, requests and usually have no subject. They have implied subjects. Exclamatory sentences on the other hand are used to make exclamations or express strong feelings whereas interrogative sentences ask questions. The interrogative sentence is usually indicated by the "Wh" type of questions. That is who, what, which, when, where etc. The structure of proverbial personal names in Dagbani are also characterised by sentences and sentence function. They relate to speech act or function as declaratives, imperatives, interrogatives and exclamatives.

Proverbial personal names with imperative function
Mwinlaaru (2017: 161) sees imperative clauses as emanating from speech functions such as commands or proposals. These, usually, depend on the grammatical person and the number of persons involved in executing the instruction or command, whether singular or plural. Imperatives generally may or may not take subject. They take no subject when the modal is assigned to a single addressee. It is often realised with the predicator as its minimal element. Imperative sentences have different functions such as to command or give instructions, advice, warn, or suggest, etc. based on the intonation. Intonation is the rise and fall of one's voice in speaking which affects the meaning of what is being said (Joshi 2013).

        As part of sentence function, the construction of some proverbial personal names in Dagbani are characterised by imperatives. They usually begin with a main verb and usually have no overt subject but an implied one which is understood as *nyini* in Dagbani and 'you' in English. Sometimes the main verb in the imperative may be preceded by preverbal particles. Proverbial personal names with imperative clause structure are illustrated in (9a -f) below:

(9) PROVERB				NAME
a.	*Yɛli*	*ti*	*ti*	**Yɛlititi**
	Speak	give	2PL	
	'Speak for us'			

b.	*Zom*	*sala*		**Zomsala**
	'fear	person'		
	'Fear	human being'		

c.	*Yum*	*zaa*		**Yumzaa**
	love	all		
	'Love all'			

d.	*Chɛli*	*ti*	*Wuni*	**Chentiwuni**
	'leave	give	God'	
	'Give all to God'			

e.	*mali*	*ti*	*ti.*	**Malititi**
	make	give	us	
	'Solve our problems for us'			

f.	*Timi*	*tooni*		**Timtooni**
	give	front		
	'Take the lead/to be prosperous in life'			

g.	*Ban*	*beni*	*ni*	*nya*	**Beeninya**
	those	present	FUT	see	
	'Those present will see'				

The above are proverbial personal names which function as imperatives. They are headed by main verbs. Some of them give instructions or commands whiles others express requests, advice, wish. They have no overt subjects as the subjects are understood or implicitly stated referring to the second person singular pronoun 'you' which is represented as *nyini* in Dagbani.

In some other situations, proverbial personal names are demonstrated as imperative sentences in Dagbani through the use of the first-person plural pronoun. In Dagbani, imperative sentences could thus also begin with the first-person plural pronoun *ti* 'us' preceding a verbal phrase. In English, this is normally realised as 'let us'. Proverbial personal names identified with this structure are illustrated in (10a-c) below:

(10)	PROVERB			NAME
a.	*Ti*	*yum*	*ba*	**Tiyumba**

1PL.SBJ   love   3PL.OBJ

'Let's love them'

b.   *Ti*   *shina*   **Tishina**

      1PL.SBJ   quiet

      'Let's be quiet/patience'

c.   *Ti*   *bomi*   *yɛm*   **Tibomiyɛm**

      1PL.SBJ   look for   knowledge

      'Let's search for knowledge'

The above proverbial personal names function as imperatives introduced by the first-person plural *ti* 'us' at subject position. The use of the first-person plural pronoun in the imperative sentence indicates a kind of inclusiveness of the one issuing the command as part of those who are to execute the instruction. Proverbially, the name giver indicates that what lesson, instruction or advise is enshrined in the name to socirty, he is not excluded. Imperative clauses express different kinds of directives, be it an order, command, or make a request.

    Hondoko (2010: 13) argues that imperatives can also occur in negative form. The negative form of imperatives requires the presence of the modal verb 'do' to accompany the negator 'not', For example, 'Don't move!' or 'Don't try again!'. In Dagbani, these negative imperative forms are usually constructed with the main verb preceded by a preverbal particle *di* which signals a negative command. Some of the proverbial personal names that indicate negative form of imperatives are illustrated in (11) below.

(11)   PROVERB   NAME

a.   *Di*   *bɔhi*   **Dibohi**

      NEG   ask

      'Do not ask'

b.   *Di*   *gaŋ*   **Digaŋ**

      NEG   discriminate

      'Don't discriminate'

Proverbial personal names with declarative function

König and Siemund (2007: 277) note that declarative sentences are speech acts that are basically used to assert, claim, state, accuse, criticise, promise and guarantee. The declarative sentence is the most common clause type in most languages and is used to make statements and convey all kinds of information in a discourse. Structurally, it is made up of a subject preceding the verb and its complement or adjunct.

    Mwinlaaru (2016) notes that in Dagaari, another Mabia language which is closely related to Dagbani, the declarative clause could be affirmative or non-affirmative. The affirmative is realised as a speech function that asserts the proposition given by a speaker. It is identified as consisting of subject, predicator and negotiator. The negotiator element in the affirmative clause is realised by the particle *na* at the end of the clause in Dagbani. Apart from normal conversation, declaratives are used in personal names to convey information to members in the society. Proverbial personal names with declarative function, syntactically,

consist of the subject preceding the verb after which follows an object and/or adjunct. The subject position could also be occupied by a singular or plural pronoun. The following are a few examples of Dagbani proverbial personal names with declarative sentence structure (12) which convey different factual information and which may either affirm a proposition or not.

(12)　　PROVERB　　　　　　　　　　　　　NAME

a.　　*N　　nya　　ba*　　　　　　　　　　***Nnyaba***
　　　　I　　see-PST　them
　　　　'I have seen them'

b.　　*N　　nyε　　　　n　　dini*　　　　　***Nnyεndini***
　　　　I　　get-PST　　my　own
　　　　'I got my own/mine'

c.　　*N　　nyaŋ　　ba　　kari*　　　　　　***Nnyaŋbakari***
　　　　I　　defeat-PST　them　truth
　　　　'I defeated them with the truth

d.　　*Ti　　yuuni　　　ba*　　　　　　　　***Tiyuuniba***
　　　　we　　see-IMPERF　them
　　　　'We are looking at them'

e.　　*N　　nyε　　　　bala*　　　　　　　　***Nnyεbala***
　　　　I get-PST　　partner
　　　　'I got a partner/ counterpart'

f.　　*N　　da　　　duŋ*　　　　　　　　　***Ndaduŋ***
　　　　I　　buy-PST　enmity
　　　　'I bought enmity'

g.　　*Bε　　neei　　　ti*　　　　　　　　　***Bεneeti***
　　　　they　wake　　　us
　　　　'They　have woken us up'

h.　　*Bε　　tam　bε　　piligu*　　　　　　***Bεtambεpiligu***
　　　　they　forget　　their beginning
　　　　'They have forgot about their origin'

i.　　*M　　bi　　lari　　n　　dim*　　　　　***Mbilarindim***
　　　　I NEG　　laugh　my　enemy
　　　　'I don't laugh at my enemy'

j.　　*N　　yεli　　　Wuni*　　　　　　　　***Nyεliwuni***
　　　　I　　speak PST　God

'I spoke to God'

The above are declarative proverbial personal names in Dagbani. Structurally, they are made of the subject verb object (SVO) word order which is common to the Mabia languages of the Niger-Congo family. It is also observed that most of the proverbial personal names are affirmatives to statements except (32i) which is non-affirmative. Non-affirmative declaratives in Dagbani are realised with negative preverbal particles such as *bi, pa,* and *ku.* These preverbal particles when used in a statement render the function of the statement negative as observed in (32i) above. As Mwinlaaru (2016: 140-145) notes, affirmative clauses are realised as speech functions that assert a proposition made by a speaker whiles non-affirmatives deal with negative declarative clauses that oppose a proposal.

Proverbial personal names with interrogative function
Another class of proverbial personal names identified in line with sentence function is the interrogative. According to Mwinlaaru (2016: 148), interrogative clauses are typically realised as a speech function of questions which demand information. They are of two types, namely, the polar interrogative and non-polar interrogative clause. In English, interrogative sentences are identified by "Wh" – questions and the process of inversion which is where the position of the subject and the verb are exchanged in a sentence. In this case, the verb comes before the subject, instead of the regular subject before verb (Wiredu 1999). In Dagbani, interrogative sentences are identified by words such as, *ya, bɔ, ŋuni, dini, bee,* etc, which are similar to the English interrogative words such as 'where', 'what', 'who' or, 'which'. Unlike English, in Dagbani, all the interrogative words, *ŋuni, ya, dini* and *bɔ* can be used at subject and object positions in clauses or sentences. Interrogatives are also used in personal names, especially, proverbial personal names in Dagbani. These names, as suggested, ask questions about the unlimited mystery, experiences, and expectations of man in his daily interactions in the social environment. Some interrogative proverbial personal names in Dagbani are illustrated in (13):

(13) PROVERB   NAME
a.   *Ya   ka   di   ka*   ***Yakadika***
        Q   does it   not exist
        'Where does it not exist?'

b.   *M   bini   wo   ya*   ***Mbiniwoya***
        1SG   thing go   Q
        'Where did my thing go?'

c.   *Bɔrita   nyuri   ya*   ***Boritinyuriya***
        1SG   drink-IMPRF   Q
        'Where will the destroyer live?'

d.   *N   sima   be   ya*   ***Nsimbeya***
        1SG friend   be   Q
        'Where is my friend?'

e.   Ŋuni   *kpalinda*   Ŋunkpalinda
            Q   remaining
            'Who is remaining on this earth?'

f.   *N ʒɛm   ŋuni*   **N3emŋuni**
            1SG   belittle   Q
            'Who have I belittled?'

g.   Ŋun   *nyɛ   wuni*   Ŋunnyewuni
            Q   is   God
            'Who   is God?'

h.   Ŋun   nyari o   dini   Ŋunnyariodini
            Q   sees   3SG   own
             'Who is sees his own problems?'

i.   Ŋun   *mi   sɔha*   Ŋunmisɔ**ha**
            Q   know tomorrow
            'Who   knows   tomorrow?'

j.   N   saɣim bɔ   **Nsaɣimbo**
            1SG spoil Q
            'What have I spoiled?'

k.   *A   bɔhi   wuni*   *Abohiwuni*
            2SG ask   God
            'Did you ask God?'

l.   *Bɔ   n-su   juŋ*   *Bonsujuŋ*
            Q   responsible   jubilation
            'What is the cause for jubilation?'

m.   *Bɛ   ni   niŋ   bɔ*   *Bɛniniŋbo*
            3PL   will   do   Q
            They   will   do   what?

n.   *Bɔ n-su   duŋ?*   *Bonsuduŋ?*
            Q   responsible   enmity
            'What is responsible/cause for enmity?'

o.   *N   niŋ   dini?*   *Nniŋdini?*
            1SG do   Q
            I   do   what?
            'What have I done?'

p.   *Dini   ku   bahi?*   ***Dinkubahi?***
       Q   not   leave
       'Which/what will not leave?'

q.   *Dini   biɛri   ma?*   ***Dinbiɛrima?***
       Q   paining 1SG
       'Which/what paining/ pains me?'

r.   *Di   piiri   m   bɔ?*   ***Dipiirimbo?***
       It   takes   1SG   Q
       'What does it take from me?'

From the data presented in (13), it is observed that proverbial personal names also come in the form of interrogatives. Such names are marked with interrogative words such as *ya, bɔ, dini,* and ŋuni in Dagbani. These interrogative words may appear at the subject or object position in the sentence. Another way by which interrogatives are marked in Dagbani is the use of the word **bee** 'or'. The only name identified with this word is *Zaabee*, which literally means 'With everyone inclusive?'

It is also observed that interrogative proverbial personal names that are marked with *ya* often ask questions about the location or place of something or person. Those marked with ŋuni ask questions with reference to humans whereas those marked with *dini* and *di* ask questions with reference to objects or inanimates whereas *bɔ* asks questions with reference to both human and objects. These are contextualised thus in (14 – 17):

(14)   Interrogative proverbial names marked with the word *ya*
       a. *Yakadika*   'Where does it not exist?'
       b. *Mbiniwoya*   'Where did my thing go?'
       c. *Boritinyuriya*   'Where will the distractor be?'
       d. *Nsimbeya*   'Where is my friend?'

(15)   Interrogative proverbial personal names marked with ŋuni
       e. Ŋunkpalinda   'Who will remaining on this earth?'
       f. *Nʒemŋuni*   'Who have I belittled?'
       g. Ŋunnyewuni   'Who is God?'
       h. *Njeliŋuni*   *'Who do I hate?'*
       i. Ŋunmisoha   *'Who knows tomorrow?'*

(16)   Interrogative proverbial personal names marked with *bɔ*
       j. *Nsaɣimbo*   'What have I destroyed?'
       k. Bonsuduŋ   'What causes enmity?'
       l. *Benininbo*   'What will they do?'

(17)   Interrogative proverbial personal names marked with *dini* and *di*
       m. *Dinikubahi*   'Which one will not leave?'

n. *Dinibiɛrima*   *'Which/what pains me?'*

o. *Dipiirimbo*   *'Which of my belonging does it take?'*

Conclusion

The study shows that Dagbani proverbial personal names appear in different types of phrases and sentences and can be categorised, chiefly, into simple and compound sentences. While the simple sentence proverbial personal name consists of one clause without a conjunction, the compound sentence contains two clauses with coordinating conjunctions. Proverbial personal names in Dagbani are also analysed as compound sentences based on the number of clauses they possess. Under this category of proverbial names, the study considered the whole proverb rather than the truncated version from which the name is derived. The truncated or short forms of the names are usually taken either from the beginning, the middle or the ending part of the proverb. For example, the study notes that a proverbial personal name like *Wunibiyeli* is derived from the proverb *Wuni bi yɛli ka salinima niŋ bo?* which literally means 'God has not spoken so what can man do?' The proverbial personal name derived from this whole proverb is taken from the initial clause, *Wunibiyɛli*.

Recommendations

I suggest that future researchers should consider carrying out a thematic study of personal names in Dagbani to reveal the many and varied themes that are encapsulated in personal names in Dagbani as a language. Additionally, name giving is an integral part of African culture, therefore, it needs to be studied further in order to unearth information that would be crucial in the promotion and preservation of our culture.

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