

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF VARIETIES OF THE SOCIO-TERMINOLOGY *du, dzi, ye* AND *MANGER* IN EWE, MFANTSE, DANGME AND FRENCH

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Abstract

Every language is characterised by its own linguistic values. African languages in general, and Ghanaian languages, are in most cases interconnected at different levels; phonologically, morphologically, semantically, etc. Generally, there are terminologies whose equivalents in other languages retain their expressive values. This study is a contrastive study of the socio-terminological varieties of ‘du in Ewe, ‘dzi’ in Mfantse, ‘ye’ in Dangme and ‘manger’ in French. The study is based on an observation of the structure and uses of ‘du, ‘dzi’, ‘ye’ and manger’’ in the four selected languages. The assumption is that these words express similar concepts and are used in similar contexts in the different languages. The focus of the study is to find out how this assumption plays out in the use of this common socio-terminology in the given languages. In this study, the semantic properties of the use of the four lexical items were compared and examined in various contexts. This comparison helped to conclude and confirm that these expressions have common behaviour patterns in different sociolinguistic contexts. Thus although these terms share the literal meaning “eat”, they acquire some other contextual meanings which may be present in one language or another but absent in others.

Keywords : *Ghanaian languages, terminologies, contrastive study, semantic properties*

Résumé

Chaque langue se caractérise par ses propres valeurs linguistiques. Les langues

africaines en général et les langues ghanéennes sont dans la plupart des cas interconnectées à différents niveaux ; phonologiquement, morphologiquement, sémantiquement, etc. Généralement, il existe des terminologies dont les équivalents dans d'autres langues conservent leurs valeurs expressives. Cette étude est une étude contrastive des variétés socio-terminologiques de "du" en éwé, "dzi" en mfantse, 'ye' en dangme et 'manger' en français. L'étude est basée sur une observation de la structure et des utilisations de 'du, 'dzi', 'ye' et manger" dans les quatre langues sélectionnées. L'hypothèse est que ces mots expriment des concepts similaires et sont utilisés dans des contextes similaires dans les différentes langues. L'objectif de l'étude est de découvrir comment cette hypothèse joue dans l'utilisation de cette socio-terminologie commune dans les langues données. Dans cette étude, les propriétés sémantiques de l'utilisation de 'du, 'dzi', ye et manger' ont été comparées et examinées dans des contextes variés. Cette comparaison a permis de conclure et de confirmer que ces expressions ont des modèles de comportement communs dans différents contextes sociolinguistiques selon leur contexte.

Mots clés : langues ghanéennes, terminologies, étude contrastive, propriétés sémantiques

1. Background study

Apart from the French language, the other three chosen languages are among the languages in the southern part of Ghana that have received literary status and are used as lingua franca in both major and minor communities in Ghana. They are also used as medium of transmission in both major and minor electronic media. They are taught in primary, secondary, and tertiary (degree and diploma awarding) institutions as programmes of study. French is also learnt to some extent from basic to the tertiary institutions in Ghana. These languages have some words or roots of words in common with similar meaning. The terms of interest are *du* in Ewe, *dzi* in Mfantse, *ye* in Dangme and *manger* in French.

Studies show Ewe, Dangme and Mfantse languages are closely related. Together, they form a sub-group in what is called the Kwa group of the Niger-Congo stock of languages (Ameka, 1987). In this vein these languages have some expressions that depict related meanings. As people move from one geographical area to another, they settle in speech

communities and elements of one language are introduced into another and vice versa (Montgomery, 2006), leading to language contact effects. These effects can be identified in sounds, words, sentences, speeches or within discourses. Any learner of a new language largely makes constant referral to previously acquired language by transferring similarities and differences from such languages (Odlin, 1994). This may be a reason why learners of French who have previous mastery of other Ghanaian languages transfer their linguistic experiences into their language acquisition.

The scope of this study focused on the terms “*du*”, “*dzi*”, “*ye*” and “*manger*” to investigate further how these four languages show similarity in meaning or otherwise. The work seeks to compare the contextual meanings of these terms in the various languages.

In view to contributing to literature, we seek to identify the various meanings associated with “*du*”, “*dzi*”, “*ye*” and “*manger*” in different contexts. In addition, we want to identify the meanings of those four lexical items that are common to all the four languages, to only two languages or to only one language.

In a study of etymology of some words in Akan, Ewe and Dangme, Tetteh et al. (2019) found out that the three languages have some words in common but there are no words that belong exclusively to Akan and Ewe whereas there are words found exclusively for Akan and Dangme; and Dangme and Ewe. From this they concluded that it means that Akans and Dangmes have ever co-lived but Akans and Ewes have never co-lived. Dogbey (2020), treated *du* as part of eat verbs in Ewe. According to him, these verbs display several semantic and syntactic factors which showcase their meanings and gratify them for context-specific roles. One specific property of EAT verbs in Ewe is that they do not require obligatorily instruments to substantiate their meaning. Dogbey pointed out that *du* as a verb denotes eating by mastication of solid foods and further explained that *du* has same meaning in English to mark mastication: graze, chew, gnaw and others. According to Ameka (2006)

majority of Ewe verbs take obligatory complements and there is a balance between the semantic specificity and generality of the verb vis-à-vis that of the complement. He found out that some verbs like *ɔ* require a complement that is a basic level term (e.g., *ɔ nu* ‘eat thing’).

2. Theory of Monogenesis

This study is inspired by Monogenesis theory of languages which explains that humans are all descended from a single pair of ancestors. Whitney (1884: 396) was with the view that “*human languages might well have become as different as we now find them to be, even though all of them descended from the rudimentary and undeveloped dialect of some single original family or tribe.*” It means that all world languages could have originated from the same protolanguage but as time elapses, they differ from each other. This unavoidable change also comes in line with the use of the languages and their related ways of expressions. The variation could be due to the increasing geographical distancing of the population groups after their migration from their original settlement.

This change is also noticed in the selected languages. It is realized that to some extent they have same form of expressing ideas that cut across all of them. But there is variation which occur in the use of similar terminologies which was once used to express common meaning.

3. Methodology

The sites for the collection of data were Winneba and Ajumako campuses of the University of Education, Winneba; and communities in Ajumako, Somanya, Ho and Lome. These are communities where the languages under study are used by native speakers. Primary data were collected from students studying these languages at the University when they were asked to form as many different sentences as possible with the term given in different contexts. The students also provided the English translation of their sentences. There were 20 students for each language.

More data were collected from selected indigenes of the languages who were not students through unstructured interview. In the case of French,

some francophone students were interviewed to gather enough information regarding the use of “manger”.

To confirm the validity of the data from the students and the indigenes and the correctness of the meanings they ascribed to them, the data from the students were subjected to a focus group discussion made up of 5 native speakers who have lived in the language community for not less than 10 years. The discussions confirmed the sentences from the students and provided the researchers with other meanings of the terms as used in different contexts. The data were analysed using comparative methods to get the needed results.

4. Data analysis

From the data collected, we found out that the lexical items under study does not have meaning in isolation unless it is put into a context. Meanwhile the general observation is that it is literarily used as a verb to mean (eat) in most of the cases in all the four languages. First and foremost, it is used in parallel contexts and secondly in varied contexts based on what it means. Parallel context means the four languages or two of the four use the terms in an analogous manner to produce the same effect of communication. The varied context means the terms do not express the same meaning in other languages. From the data collected we found out that the terms, used as verbs, can assume the following meanings: eat, owe, spend, succeed, tease, pamper, show concern, pain lead, celebrate, have sex, wear out, etc.

4.1 Common meanings in Ewe, Dangme, Mfantse and French

The meanings like “spend time”, “spend money”, “burn” or “wear out” are found to be commonly used in the given languages. They can be used in any of the languages to mean the same thing like in the other language. This normally plays on the learning of other languages since it is perceived that most of these languages have some terms or expressions with similar effect. In table 1 below, we have examples of the various terms with similar meaning in varied contexts to help explain the various

usages in the languages.

Table 1. Common meanings in Ewe, Dangme, Mfantse and French

Themes	Examples	Meanings
Spend money	a. Yaonɔ ɔ̃u ga home gã aɔ̃e.	a. Yaonɔ spent a huge sum of money.
	b. E ye e sika a ta.	b. He has spent all his money.
	c. Oedzi edwuma no sika pii.	c. He has embezzled huge sums of money belonging to the company.
	d. Le commerçant a mangé tout son capital.	d. The trader has spent all his capital.
Spend time	a. E ya ye be kpiti nge e ma mi.	a. He spent short time in his hometown.
	b. Maɔ̃u ɔ̃eyiɔ̃i gede le duame.	b. I will spend a lot of time in town.
	c. La communication au téléphone mange beaucoup de son temps.	c. Telephone communication takes a lot of his time.
	d. Banyin no dzii mber pii wɔ̃ kurow mu.	d. The man spent more time in town.
Wear out	a. Gakpoawo ɔ̃u si wɔ̃e be xɔ̃ la gba.	a. The irons are rusted that is why the building collapsed.
	b. Nyumu ɔ̃ tokota a ye saminya	b. The man's shoes have worn out so much.
	c. Kur no dzidzii kɔ̃ ne nan ase.	c. The sore ate into his foot.

- d. La rouille a mangé le fer. d. The rust has eaten into the iron.

The examples show that the four (4) languages chosen, share some common ways of expressing thoughts by using common ideology or concept in a particular context. In this case, many speakers may have the passion to communicate and easily understand some of these common words. This commonness among the languages leads us to the Monogenesis theory of languages. A concept which explains that humans are all descended from a single pair of ancestors. This perception cuts across our study and it is shown the in given examples. We can conclude that all languages are interrelated and interdependent, but their origin is not known.

4.2 Common Meaning with Mfantse, Ewe and Dangme

Studies show that these languages are closely related, each being by far more closely related than either is to any other language. According to Kropp (1972), Dangme, Ewe and Akan (in our case Mfantse) are specially related. This may contribute to the findings that the three languages share some common meanings in contexts. Even though the terms vary and differ as a linguistic sign they are used to serve similar purposes in the various languages. The table below shows some commonly used meanings derived from the terms of the three Ghanaian languages.

Table 2: Common Meaning with Mfantse, Ewe and Dangme

Lead	a. Senyo d̥u fia azɔ.	a. Senyo is finally a chief.
	b. E ye tsɛ ngɛ ku ɔ mi jɛha babauu.	b. He led the group for many years.
	c. ɔno na odzi kuw no enyim.	c. She is leading the group.

Celebrate	<p>a. Meḡu dzigbezã.</p> <p>b. Wa ye bolonya nge Ada.</p> <p>c. Medzi m'awoda Yawda.</p>	<p>a. I celebrated my birthday.</p> <p>b. We celebrated the Christmas at Ada.</p> <p>c. I will celebrate my birthday on Thursday.</p>
Pamper	<p>a. Fofonye ḡua vi nam ḡutõ.</p> <p>b. Maa Lani yeõ bi ha e bibi õ tsõ.</p> <p>c. Ne ba no dzi bam dodow</p>	<p>a. My father pampers me a lot.</p> <p>b. Maa Lani pampers her grandchild too much.</p> <p>c. His son feels too pampered.</p>
Show concern	<p>a. Nutsu la ḡu na amedõ ḡutõ.</p> <p>b. Yo ne õ ye õ nõ he kõmõ saminya.</p> <p>c. Okedzii ne dan noho nkõmbõ kyeræe õdzekurow</p>	<p>a. The man shows a lot of concern for others.</p> <p>b. This woman shows a lot of concern for others.</p> <p>c. He went to discuss his building with the chief.</p>
Embezzle	<p>a. Amewu ḡu dõwõ fe ga home gã.</p> <p>b. Nyumu õ ye kpe sika ne a ke si le õ.</p> <p>c. Oedzi edwuma no sika pii.</p>	<p>a. Amewu embezzled huge sum of money from the company.</p> <p>b. The man embezzled the association's money that was in his care.</p> <p>c. He embezzled huge sum of money from the company.</p>
Succeed	<p>a. Black Stars ḡu dzi.</p> <p>b. Maku ye nguõ nge ka a mi.</p> <p>c. Se õbõ noho mbõdzen a, obedzi nkonyim.</p>	<p>a. The Black Stars have won.</p> <p>b. Maku is successful in the exam.</p> <p>c. She will be successful when she tries harder.</p>

Tease	a. Kofi ɔ̄u fewu le nyɔ̄nua ɲu. b. Nɔ̄mo Apete yeɔ̄ la saminya. c. Mma nndzi aberwa noho few.	a. Kofi mocked at the woman. b. Nɔ̄mo Apete teases a lot. c. Do not tease or make mockery of the old woman.
Be in pain	a. Ta le Kojo ɔ̄um vevie. b. Yayo nane ngē le yee daa ligbi. c. Dadzie ridzi yaw wɔ̄ ebusuafo no ho.	a. Kojo's head is paining him severely. b. Grandma's leg hurts every day. c. Dadzie is going through pain (emotional) all because of his family.
Owe	a. Eɔ̄u fe ɲutɔ̄ b. Awo ye le hiɔ̄ sisi akpe kake. c. Drabanyi no dzi no kaw.	a. He owes a lot. b. Awo owes him/her 1000 cedis. c. The driver owes her.

The examples in the table show that the three languages have common ways of expressing some thoughts. Interestingly they share similar themes which determine which idea is being expressed. Though the terms or expressions may vary, according to the language, the information given remain the same. This may probably be from the fact that these languages have been in contact for many years or because they are from the same language family.

4.3 Mfantse and Dangme common meanings

Some common thematic meanings are found to be exclusive to Mfantse and Dangme. It points to the fact that most Ghanaian languages are closely related.

Table 3: Mfantse and Dangme common meanings

Themes	Examples	Meanings
Tell a lie	a. Juli ɔmɛ ye lakpa nge kojomi he ɔ.	a. The thieves lied at the court.
	b. Mma nndzi ator nnkyerɛ abofra no.	b. Do not lie to the children.
Spiritual fortification	a. Jame a numo ɔ ye tsopa.	a. That old man has eaten medicine.
	b. Oedzi edur.	b. She has eaten medicine.
Be punctual	a. Tsɔɔlɔ nɛ ɔ ye ɔ be no be fɛɛ be.	a. This teacher is always punctual.
	b. Papa no dzi ne mber do.	b. The man obeys his time.
Worry	a. Nye nge kɔmɔ yee tso nge sane nɛ ɔ he.	a. You are worrying too much about this problem.
	b. Odzi ne yamu dodow.	b. He eats his tummy too much.
Causing trouble	a. E ye sane hi babau nge ma a mi.	a. She caused a lot of trouble in the town.
	b. Oedzi eturturasem.	b. He/she is causing trouble.

From the examples given in Table 3 above, it is realized that “ye” and “dzi” in Dangme and Mfantse respectively express some common themes. However, to express these themes in Ewe or in French, the lexical items “dũ” or “manger” will not be used but rather other verbs will be used. For instance, the theme of “tell a lie” will be expressed in Ewe and in French respectively with the verbs “ble” and “ment” as:

1. Sukuvila ble nufiala la (The student lied to the teacher)
2. Oscar ment à ses parents. (Oscar lies to his parents)

4.4 Mfantse and Ewe common meanings

The data we analysed shows some common meanings that are used in both Mfantse and Ewe. The examples below show these meanings.

3. *Nutsu la ɔ̄ua nyɔ̄nuvi la yesiayi.* The man always has sex with the girl.
4. *Ɔkaa nokwar de odzii aketeesia feɛfew no.* He confessed that he had sex with the beautiful lady.

The examples in sentences 3 and 4 depict the common meaning of having a sexual encounter with someone in both languages. The case of the example in Ewe is figuratively used to mean that the man has been having sexual affairs with the girl.

4.5 Ewe and French common meanings

This work has explored the dynamic nature of languages and it manifests in the various meanings derived from the use of the given terms. The Ewe and French languages share some of the meanings with other languages but there are some expressions which are only found in Ewe and French. Some of the selected themes like (nibble or bite) appear only in French and Ewe.

For example

5. *Nyɔ̄nuvi la ɔ̄u na efe fetsu.*
6. *Cette fille mange souvent ses ongles.*
7. *This girl bites the nails often*

The examples 5 and 6 are translated in 7 as: This girl bites the nails often. From what is in the examples, the lexical items under study “ɔ̄u” and “manger” are used to mean “bite”. This is a meaning common to only Ewe and French as in the two other languages, the concept of bite is expressed with other verbs, thus, “ko” and “ka” in Dangme and Mfantse respectively.

4.6 Exclusive meaning – Ewe

As we have seen earlier, meanings of the terms are derived from contexts. It is realised that in Ewe the term “ɔ̄u” is used in many other

contexts that are not expressed in Mfantse, Dangme or French. This information is derived from our data and is represented in the table below.

Table 4: Exclusive meaning – Ewe

Theme	Example	Meaning
Gun powder	Do ɔ̃u na tua hafi na dae.	Put powder in the gun before firing it.
Understand	Amedzroa ɔ̃u dze	The visitor understands the language (literally: the visitor ate salt).
Lost or trouble	Mieɔ̃u agba	You have lost or you are in trouble.
Charm	Kuma ɔ̃u dzo ame.	Kuma charmed someone.
Have mastery	Emmanuel ɔ̃u t̃u na do ɲuto	Emmanuel masters the work.

In most cases the term “ɔ̃u” is used as a verb but in some other instances it is used as a noun. Like in the example: “Do ɔ̃u na tu la hafi na dae” to mean (Pour gun powder into the gun before you shoot). The actual meaning being conveyed is “to make the gun ready for shooting”. Here “ɔ̃u” is used as a noun and it means gun powder. We can explicitly say that the term “ɔ̃u” can be used differently depending on the context. The term is found in a witty phrase “ɔ̃u dze” which literally means to eat salt. But this expression is mostly used to mean the person understands the language being spoken. On many occasions people say “mieɔ̃u agba” or “mieɔ̃u fe” when they have lost something valuable or when they are in trouble. The expression “ɔ̃u dzo” is used to mean that a person is charmed. For instance, if someone says; “Kuma ɔ̃u dzo ame”, it means Kuma has charmed someone or Kuma has killed someone through charm. Another peculiar expression is “ɔ̃u t̃u na do” as in the sentence “Emmanuel ɔ̃u t̃u na do ɲuto”. This means that Emmanuel understands and masters the skills in the work. He can work easily with no

difficulties. In the various examples given, “*d̩*” is used as a verb but the context in which it is used determines the meaning attributed to it.

4.7 Exclusive meanings – Dangme

We have discussed in the previous sections, meanings that “*ye*” in Dangme share with “*du*”, “*dzi*” and “*manger*” in the other languages under study. Let us focus on some meanings of “*ye*” which appear to be absent in the other languages.

Table 5: Exclusive meanings – Dangme

Theme	Example	Meaning
Cheat	a. <i>Jokuɛ ɔ ye e hue e se.</i>	The child cheated the friend.
Being litigant	b. <i>E ye ɔ ojo saminya.</i>	He is very litigant.
Hurry	c. <i>Ye o ya nɛ o ko kpɛ se kɛ ya sukuu.</i>	Hurry up so you do not get late for school.
Help	d. <i>I kpa mo pɛɛ nɛ o ye kɛ bua mi.</i>	Please help me.
Wizard	e. <i>Etɛ Kojo ye ɔ nyɔ mi ni.</i>	Mr. Kojo is a wizard.
Apologise	f. <i>Aku ye pɔpu nge nimeli ɔmɛ a hɛ mi.</i>	Aku apologised before the elders.
Maltreat	g. <i>Yo ɔ ye e hunoyo bi ɔ awi saminya.</i>	The woman extremely maltreated her stepchild.

As shown in the table above, “*ye*” in the first sentence means “cheat”. This meaning is seen by the collocation of “*ye*” and “*se*” in which the person that is cheated is inserted between “*ye*” and “*se*”. In the example given: *Jokuɛ ɔ ye e hue e se*, “*e hue e*” (his friend) who is the person

cheated is seen between the collocants “ye” and “se”.

In example (b), “ye” expresses the meaning of being litigant. Literally, sentence b will mean “He eats litigation too much”. It is important to mention that “ojo” translated as “litigation” is the word that enables “ye” to acquire the meaning of being litigant. In sentence c, “ye” shows a meaning of *hurry*. This meaning is made complete by the presence of “o ya” which means fastness or *speed*. This portion of the sentence, “ye o ya” will literally thus mean “eat speed”.

A different meaning is associated with the use of “ye” in sentence d. Collocating with other words as *bua*, “ye” expresses the meaning of help. This meaning is absent in the other languages of interest in this study. The sentence, “Etsɛ Kojo ye ɔ nyomi ni.” can literally be translated to mean *Mr. Kojo eats night food*. However, its real meaning is that Mr. Kojo is a wizard. This meaning is derived from the kind of food that is eaten as it is believed that witches and wizards meet at night to eat and practice wizardry.

Ye as used in sentence f also conveys a meaning that is unique to Dangme per the data collected. “Ye pɔpu” means apologise. However, during the focus group discussion, it was explained that “pɔpu” could be referring to something that is very demeaning or of a lowly state so that if one has anything to do with it, it reflects the lowly state of the individual just like the biblical wearing of sackcloth to show repentance. The particular reference of “pɔpu” could however not be identified.

4.8 Exclusive meaning – Mfantse

Some of the themes from the results appear to occur only in the Mfantse language. This may not be the only exceptions there may be others but for the purpose of this work, we focused on the results from the data collected.

Table 6: Exclusive meaning – Mfantse

Theme	Example	Meaning
To be a main person	a. Kodwo dzi akotsen wə ayer no mu.	Kodwo is the main person in the cultural troop.
To fine	b. Ebə kyen kyenmum ber no mu a, wobedzi wo akaw.	If you beat the drum during the ban on drumming period, you will be fined.

Like the other languages, Mfantse also has its own way of expressing ideas. This is mainly done in context to avoid misunderstanding. From the example (a) *dzi akotsen* means being a hero or the leading character in an action. It is mostly used to express the role played by an individual in certain circumstance. Likewise, the term *dzi akaw* is also used to express a fine in a form of punishment meted against anybody who goes contrary to the law.

4.9. Exclusive meaning in French

The term “manger” has several other meanings in French depending on its context. The primary meaning is (eat) but when used in situations like we have seen in the examples below, the meaning varies to suit the context in which it is used. It is mostly used figuratively to create some stylistic effect on the reader. This makes it difficult for learners to easily understand the meaning of words even in context.

Examples:

8. *Le jeune garçon mange la fille des yeux*. Literally it means “the young boy eats the girl with the eyes”. Which may not have any sense in English, but the statement means that “the young boy is staring at the girl with a strong desire”.

9. *Le Politicien a mangé ses mots*. The politician has eaten his words. To mean that the politician has mispronounced the words.

10. *Vos élèves vous mangent la soupe sur la tête*. Literally means “your

students eat the soup over your head”. This is another way to say your students have dominated you or they are above you.

11. *Ça ne mange pas de pain*. Literally means “this does not eat bread”. This expression is used to say that “it does not cost much” or “it is less expensive”.

5. Results

The primordial meaning assigned to each of these terms in the respective language is “eat”.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| a. Ama ɖu akple etsɔ. | a. Ama ate akple yesterday. |
| b. Kwɛku ye otimi. | b. Kwɛku ate kenkey. |
| c. Esi dzii dɔkon | c. Esi ate kenkey. |
| d. Jean a mangé banku hier. | d. Jean ate banku yesterday. |

Many ideas are built around the word “eat” in these languages to figuratively show the actions of eating something. For instance, literally the concept of “soup” is known to be a liquid which must be taken in or drunk. But in some context, it is said to be eaten. This is shown in the following examples: to mean that “the children ate all the soup.”

12. *E bi ɔmɛ ye hwonyu ɔ ta kutuu ɔ mi.*

13. *Deviawo ɖu detsia katã.*

14. *Mbofra nu edzi nkwan no nyinara.*

15. *Les enfants ont mangé toute la sauce.*

From the data collected, we found out that the lexical items of interest in this study do not have meaning in isolation unless they are put into a context. Thus, their meanings are derived from context depending on the expressions they are collocated with. The terms, used as verbs, can assume secondary meanings. These secondary meanings connote consumption derived from the core meaning. Generally, “ɖu”, “ye”, “dzi”, and “manger” behave as transitive verbs. They can be direct transitive, indirect transitive or ditransitive verbs depending on their use in the sentence.

Examples: the following sentences are used to express time spent.

16. *Awo ye le hiɔ sidi akpe kake.*

17. *Banyin no dzii mber pii wɔ kurow mu.*

18. *Ama ɔ̄u yeyiyi gede le duame.*

19.

20. *La communication au téléphone mange beaucoup de son temps.*

As illustrated in the various tables above, there are some meanings that are common to all the four languages under study. Certain meanings are common to only two languages and others are exclusive to one language.

Conclusion

This study has taken a comparative look at the use of *ɔ̄u*, *ye dzi* and *manger* in four languages; Ewe, Dangme Mfantse and in French respectively. We have used mostly descriptive method to cover the meaning of these lexical items in diverse contexts. From the analysis, we can conclude that these terms in four different languages denote a common meaning which is to “eat”. The languages also share other similar meanings associated to these terms in different contexts. This in a way explain the fact that these languages might have a common root, or it is because of the languages being in contact for a longer period. In some cases, each of the languages use the terms differently or jointly with one other language. This peculiarity occurs to explain how the speakers of these languages manipulate them in their own way to express thoughts.

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