

**A PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF SELECTED YORUBA EUPHEMISMS**

**BY**

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ZARIA**

**AUGUST, 2018**

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL, AHMADU  
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IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND LITERARY STUDIES,  
FACULTY OF ARTS,  
AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY,  
ZARIA**

**AUGUST, 2018**

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation has been written by me and that it is a record of my research work. It has never been presented in any previous work for a higher degree. All quotations are indicated by quotation marks and the sources of information concerning the thesis are acknowledged by means of references.

AYIGUN KEMI MOSUNMOLA

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NAME OF STUDENT

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SIGNATURE

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DATE

## **CERTIFICATION**

This dissertation titled: *A Pragmatic Analysis of Selected Yoruba Euphemisms* by AYIGUN, KEMI MOSUNMOLA has met the standards and regulations governing the award of a Master of Arts Degree in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. It is therefore approved for its literary presentation and contribution to knowledge.

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## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to Yahweh; in whom I live, move and have my being, for His immeasurable love and grace that I have always enjoyed.

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With a heart so filled with praise, I give all glory to God; my help, my love and my everything, whose hand has made me great and a praise to my generation.

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## ABSTRACT

This research preoccupies itself mainly with the pragmatic analysis of the use of euphemisms in Yoruba language. It sets out to examine euphemisms as used by Yoruba speakers and to analyse the dynamics that govern their use by identifying the direct and indirect acts performed by Yoruba speakers in the selected euphemisms and to investigate the extent to which Politeness Maxims are adhered to in the selected euphemisms. Eighty seven euphemisms were used for analysis: thirty seven were gathered from the responses given on the word and sentence compilation task administered, while fifty others were gathered from conversations in recorded interviews and a Yoruba programme on African Independent Television, titled '*Minijojo*'. The data is gathered through the use of a triangulation method which is a multiple method of gathering data via; observation, semi- structured interview and word and sentence compilation task. The work employs an eclectic theoretical framework by drawing insights from the Speech Acts theory proposed by Austin (1962) and Searle (1976); and the Politeness Principle as put forward by Brown and Levinson (1978&1987), which is based on the specification of the Politeness Maxims outlined by Leech (1993): Tact, Generosity, Approbation, Modesty, Agreement and Sympathy Maxims. The findings reveal that a large number of Yoruba speakers, who belong to the younger age group of 20-35 have little or no understanding at all of the use of euphemisms in Yoruba language, thus, they do not use them in conversations. The study also reveals that the data analysed in the study are used to perform assertive acts, directly and expressive acts indirectly as they help in projecting the speaker's intention in the use of the euphemisms during conversations. Tact maxim, approbation maxim followed by the sympathy maxim, appears to be more powerful in the use of euphemisms by Yoruba speaker than others. This reflects the fact that in the use of euphemisms politeness is given so much credence as speakers strongly focus on pleasing others than self. Moreover, it is found that the negative euphemism is significantly used in Yoruba, because most of the euphemisms presented in the analysis used by the speakers were used as a means to avoid one taboo or the other. This in turn relates to the general law of politeness, of which the negative politeness (avoidance of discord) is of more weighty consideration than positive politeness (seeking concord).



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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.0 Background to the Study

Communication has always been a vital part of human existence and language plays a pivotal role in the communicative process, since it is the medium of all imaginative, spoken, written or gestured expressions. Over the years, the flexibility of language has afforded language users the opportunity to creatively manipulate language in order to express human thoughts, ideas, and emotions in subtle ways to foster harmonious relationships. To this end, people often make deliberate choices of communicating through indirect or pleasant expressions as against the use of expressions which are considered unpleasant or rude in communication.

Euphemism is a subtle form of language used amidst the varieties of language system employed by language users both in written and spoken form for effective communication. According to Fromkin and Rodman (2003) “euphemisms are words or phrases that replace a taboo word or serves to avoid frightening or unpleasant subjects”. That means it is generally an innocuous word or expression used in place of one that may be found offensive or suggest something unpleasant. Akanbi (2008) also refers to euphemism as “a word or phrase which replaces a taboo word or is used in an attempt to avoid either fearful or unpleasant happenings”. For example, in many societies, because death is feared, there are so many euphemisms used as substitutes such that it is more comfortable to say that “people have passed away or passed on”, than to use the word ‘die’.

According to Enright (1985) “a language without euphemism would be a defective instrument of communication. Thus, euphemism is an indispensable and natural part of human language; it

is a cultural phenomenon which cuts across all languages and cultures, for almost all cultures seem to have certain behaviour or words that are tagged as forbidden for people to mention directly at least not in a polite company. Such words as described by Fromkin and Rodman (2003) are called taboo words – they refer to acts that are forbidden or to be avoided, and in situations where an act is a taboo, reference to it automatically becomes a taboo. For example in English it is a taboo to talk about some vulgar words or swear words in public such as; ‘fuck’, ‘prick’ ‘tits’ ‘balls’, etc. Such words are often seen as dirty, as most people avoid discussions that relate to them directly or rather use less meaningful words for them. Therefore, it is not wrong to say that the existence of taboo words and ideas stimulates the creation of euphemisms.

The use of euphemism is common among the Yorùbas who as a way of life take their norms, practices and traditions very serious such that words are not just uttered anyhow; they are weighed before they are uttered . It is the belief of the Yorùbás that certain words are not to be said in their lucid forms, this consciousness is what informs the Yoruba saying; ‘*Gbogbo aṣọ kọ là n ṣá lóòrùn*’ meaning ‘*It is not all clothes that are spread in the sun*’. This explains the fact that not all words can be said in public. For example, taboo words that relate to human sexual organs, human sexual activities and the likes, are not just discussed freely; for such words, people create euphemisms as substitutes which help to reduce the effects they could have on the hearer’s mind. Taboo words in Yorùbá culture however go beyond those that relate to human sexuality, they also extend to areas such as; dressing, food, hygiene, death, names, birth, business, and royalty Oyetade (1994). Taboo is a major component of the Yorùbá culture , it is one way in which the Yorùbá society expresses its disapproval of certain kinds of behaviour believed to be harmful to its members, either for supernatural reasons or because such behaviours violate the moral code. Salami (2006), affirms that the Yorùbá people ; for example,

do not often describe the genitals by their technical terms and it is also a taboo to mention women's menstrual activity by name. Therefore, in a bid to avoid such taboo words which could make them sound loose, indecent, rude, too direct or impolite, the language users tend to settle for words that help to present them in a pleasant or mild way for effective communication.

It is against this background that this study sets out to examine the inevitability of the use of euphemism in the Yoruba society, the types of acts performed either directly or indirectly through these euphemisms in conversations and how politeness is manifested in the use of these euphemisms in Yoruba Language. For example; in Yoruba Language, when one dies, in order to sound polite and to present the news to people in a subtle and appropriate manner that will lessen the effects the news might have on its hearers, such may be expressed euphemistically by saying "He has changed position" (ó tí pa ipò dá). Here, the euphemistic term "change position" used as a substitute for death performs directly an assertive act and indirectly an expressive act. Politeness is also demonstrated by the speaker's use of the euphemism as the tact maxim is being maintained as a means to reduce the serious threats the news might pose on the addressee if he says what he intends to say directly. Thus, cost is minimised and benefit is maximised to the addressee by the speaker by expressing a substitute of what he intends to convey.

### **1.1 The Yorùbá People and Cul ture**

According to Okediji (2008), when the question is put forward, "What is Yorùbá : language, people, culture, community or geographical definition?" such question poses a lot of problem, as it seems complex. It is not easy to provide a definite answer since the manifestations of Yorùbá cultures are not only found in Africa , but in various parts of the world , such as ; in the

Americas , Caribbean Islands and Europe . Who are those referred to with the phrase “The Yorùbás” ? Are they those who speak the language and any of its dialects? Or should it be limited only to those people who at one time claim origin from Ife directly or indirectly? Are they those people who at one time or the other were either conquered or incorporated into one or the other Yorùbá kingdoms ? Or do we look around for people who have similar institutions, similar objects of worship, similar concept of beliefs and similar customs and include them into this cultural group? Owing to these facts, it seems difficult to arrive at an accurate classification or definition of ‘the Yorùbás’ .

Akinjogbin in Okedeji (2008) proposes certain criteria to be considered in defining “the Yorùbás”. The first criterion he came up with is ‘Language’ which is seen as an important and basic identity in any culture . Therefore , wherever the Yorùbá language or any of its dialects is spoken in West Africa , such is assumed to have one time or the other formed part of what can be called Yorùbá land . The second criterion is based on the assumption that quite a large group claimed to have migrated from Ife ; therefore , wherever one finds this claim , such areas should be included in the Yorùbá continuum . Despite the fact that not all these people with this claim have Oduduwa as their father, in which they are said not to speak the recognizable Yorùbá , their oral tradition cannot be dismissed and as such they should be considered as belonging to the Yorùbá culture . The third criterion is predicated on the fact that where a Yorùbá kingdom has succeeded in incorporating a non Yorùbá group for a sufficiently long period , to the extent that such an incorporated group has imbibed ; the language , the institutions , the religion and mores of the Yorùbá people , it is right to include such people or group in the Yorùbá continuum .

The fourth criterion which is the last he gave is based on the claims that some former Yorùbá kingdoms were lost to Oduduwa princes and that some of those kingdoms may have taken on other languages. However, it will be right or legitimate where the traces or evidences so permit to include such kingdoms; that is if it is possible to find similar traits and strong historical links. In drawing a geographical boundary, the present Oyo, Ogun, Ondo and Lagos states within Nigeria fall within the boundary and includes a large part of Kwara State, particularly, the Offa Igbomina and other parts of Kwara such as; Ipee, Ojoku ,Omu Aran, and Ajase Ipo. Ilorin, Ekiti, Owe and Kabba/ Bunu are also being accepted. Westward, the Ancient kingdom of Ketu, Sabe and the Ana in the present Republic of Benin, and the Atapama in the present Republic of Togo, also present no problem in being accepted as falling within the Yorùbá Land . All these people described understand one single Yorùbá language though they have several dialects of the same language . For instance , there are about twenty dialects of Yorùb á spoken in areas such as; Ijebu,Oyo, Ondo and Ekiti.

The Yorùbá tribe is known in West Africa and even all over the continent as one blessed with rich cultural values, so rich is the culture that its presence is felt in every aspect such as greeting, naming, language use, religious worship, arts, music, dressing and other aspects of life Adebileje (2012). The Yorùbás are also well known for their great recognition of the Supreme Being ‘God’ such that they are a religious group of people who are mainly Christians and Muslims. However, before the advent of Christianity and Islam, they had their own religion and they believed in their own deities , which differ according to geographical location . There are many deities such as şàngó (god of thunder ), ògún (god of iron ), sanpanna (god of smallpox ),



eṣù (the devil ), oya, ọbàtálá, yemoja and many other gods believed to be intermediaries between God (Olódùmare ) and man.

The Yorùbá culture has a developed sense of right and wrong over the years , and this moral sense has produced so many customs, rules, laws, traditions and taboos which make the people sensitive to any form of departure from them by the members of the society. In the Yoruba culture certain things are not meant to be mentioned or discussed. For instance, it is forbidden for wives to refer to their husbands by names; it is also wrong in the course of her relationship with her in-laws, especially his brother or sister, to call them by their real names, for doing that is seen as disrespect. Therefore, in order to avoid calling them by their real names she creates certain euphemistic names to refer to her husband and in-laws; examples include: *Baale* (the father of the house), *Olowo ori mi* (the one who has my bride price), *Ade ori mi* (my crown), *Oluwa mi* (my lord) or pedigree names such as '*Alani, Ajani, Ayinde*'. She uses euphemisms such as the following to refer to her brothers and sisters in-law;

#### **Male**

Baba ọkọ mi (my father in-law)  
Akowe (secretary)

#### **Female**

Sisi mi (young lady)  
ìya ọkọ mi (my mother in-law)

Adeoye (2014), states that Yorùbás beyond all these , as a result of the fear certain words evoke, do not mention them, but come up with other words for them in order to erase the horror or pain that comes with such words, especially words like 'death and disease', for example; due to the intense fear for death we are often afraid to say 'if I should die today', instead we say 'if anything happens to me', in the same vein people do not like to talk about some venereal diseases such as AIDS, they rather substitute the real word by using a similar less meaningful

term like; (*kòkòrò éédi or arun ko gboogun*) meaning an insect called AIDS or an incurable disease. Furthermore, there are topics, themes or expressions that have come to be attached with stigmatization and would not be spoken by the members of the society so as not to be seen as rude or loose; instead euphemistic devices are employed to dress up such words.

The Yorùbá culture is however dynamic and exceptional for its high regards for politeness as part of daily life. In Yoruba Language, euphemisms as explained earlier often relate to the regular taboo topics such as sexual organs, sexual play and ethnic differences, they also refer to people's character and attributes in a polite way, while some other euphemisms seek to conceal information, especially when conversing in public. It is in light of these, that the study examines the use of euphemisms in selected utterances from mundane conversations in Yoruba language, using certain pragmatic tool for analysis.

## **1.2 Statement of the Research Problem**

Goodenough (1957:167) describes a society's culture to consist of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members, and to do so in any role that they accept....” He went further to state that “knowledge is socially acquired: the necessary behaviour learned and do not come from any kind of genetic environment”. Language is an aspect of culture. Hence, people tend to behave in accordance with the norms of the society. These norms relate to different aspects of the lives of the people such as; taboos, euphemisms and politeness strategies which are universal to all languages and cultures. This is captured in Whorf's words thus;

We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native language... we cut nature up, organise it into concepts and ascribe significances as we do largely because we are parties to an agreement to organise it in this way- an agreement that

holds throughout our speech community and is codified in the patterns of our language...Carroll,(1956).

Therefore, it can be said that people organise their thoughts to meet the demands of their language in speech such that it is difficult to talk about issues as it relates to tabooed words or idea without employing certain substitutes so as to avoid offences or emotional discomfort.

Considering all these, it is regrettably alarming to say that, nowadays, many Yoruba speakers especially in urban and multilingual areas and among the younger age group have little or no idea at all about the existence of such norms as euphemisms and taboos. This might be because such norms have been taken over by religion and technology as most parents and guardians see them as superstitious. They therefore have failed to educate or pass down the knowledge to their children who prefer to watch programmes on the television than sit down with their parents to learn these norms. As a result, most children grow up with no idea of such interactional norms like taboo or euphemisms.

It is obvious that originally, words name or mean exactly the same things and objects they are meant to. But in language there are times when the need for word substitution while speaking on sensitive issue arises, such that people often search for milder alternatives to express their opinions whenever they feel their words might sound offensive or rude. The study therefore intends to examine the extent to which Yoruba speakers in the course of discussions communicate either directly or indirectly what their words mean in the language by using euphemisms.

Also, since the use of euphemisms as noted by Arif (2015), requires that it should be studied within a specific discourse, this study takes a look at how the Yoruba cultural context affects the use and interpretation of euphemisms. The study adopts a more contextual approach and focuses

on how Politeness maxims are adhered to by Yoruba speakers in their use of selected euphemisms.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

In the light of the aforementioned, this research attempts to provide answers to the following research questions;

- i. What are the euphemisms used by the selected Yoruba speakers?
- ii. What are the Direct and Indirect Speech Acts performed in the selected euphemisms in Yoruba?
- iii. To what extent does the use of euphemism by Yoruba speakers adhere to the Politeness maxims in the selected mundane conversations?

### **1.4 Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The study aims to carry out a pragmatic analysis of Yorùbá Euphemisms . The specific objectives the study sets out to achieve are to;

- a. identify and categorise the Yoruba euphemisms provided by the respondents.
- b. identify the Direct and Indirect Speech Acts performed in the selected euphemisms in Yoruba.
- c. examine the extent to which the Politeness maxims are usually adhered to in the use of Yoruba euphemisms in the selected mundane conversations.

### **1.5 Scope and Delimitation**

The present study is situated within the confines of Pragmatics. It examines specifically pragmatic elements such as; Speech Act Theory and Politeness maxims . It is limited to the euphemisms gathered from contexts of mundane conversations from the Yorùbá programme on African Independent Television (AIT) ‘Minijojo’ and also from recorded interview sessions with adult respondents who are believed to have a great mastery of the language. This study also limits itself to the euphemisms collected as responses from respondents to the word and

sentence compilation task administered. The euphemisms are presented in the *Akoto Ede Yoruba Ode Oni* (the Yoruba spoken in Oyo town) not because of its superiority over other dialects but because it is believed to be the one most mutually intelligible to most Yoruba speakers.

## **1.6 The Significance of the Study**

Many studies have been done in various fields on euphemisms, such as in daily conversations, interactional communication, advertisements, literature, rhetoric and in linguistics; in areas like Semantics, Socio – linguistics and even in Pragmatics especially in English language but not much has been covered, with respect to indigenous languages in Nigeria. This is part of the justification for this research in the sense that the analysis of the use of euphemisms by the Yoruba speakers from a pragmatic perspective would arguably be an addition to knowledge in linguistics. It will yield valuable information on the use of euphemisms by Yoruba speakers and the various acts that are performed in its usage in various contexts. It will also shed more light on how euphemisms protect the integrity of interlocutors in conversations.

The study is also significant because of its pedagogical implications in that, since Yorùbá is one of the celebrated three (3) languages in Nigeria taught at primary, secondary and tertiary level, the study could be used by both teachers and writers of Yorùbá language as a teaching material which will enhance the learning of Yorùbá and its interactional norms (i.e. euphemisms and taboos) in schools. And consequently, it will help to preserve the Yoruba cultural heritage, thereby, saving the language from extinction.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Preamble**

This chapter gives a detailed review of other works that are related to this research. It is segmented into two broad sections. The first deals with the review of related literature from conceptual and authorial perspectives, while the second deals with the various approaches to the study of euphemism employed as theoretical framework for research analysis.

#### **2.1 Conceptual Review**

This section presents a review of related topics ranging from language and context, linguistic relativity to the concept of Euphemism; its etymology, definitions, features and classifications. The section also covers an overview of Pragmatics and other aspect of it, such as; Speech Acts, Cooperative Principle, Implicature, Politeness Theory, as well as the relationship between Politeness and Euphemism.

##### **2.1.1 Language and Context**

Language is used by man to exchange knowledge, beliefs, opinions, wishes, threats, commands, thanks, promises, declarations and feelings. It is a system of communication used by humans to establish social relationships and an instrument with which belief systems and cultural values are communicated. According to Hartman and Stock (1973:123-124) “Language is the most fundamental means of human communication as: All human beings use language to interact with other members of the same speech community....” Language is that which does not exist in a vacuum, it is usually used within a context. Struck and While (1972:72) observes this by

saying that “Language is perpetually in flux. It is a living stream, shifting, changing, receiving new strengths from a thousand tributaries, losing old forms in the back waters of time”. Human language is used in diverse ways to meet various needs; thus, it is used to express various functions.

Haliday (1994) classifies the functions of language into three broad categories: ideational, interpersonal and textual functions. The first which is the ideational function talks about how language is used to organise, understand and express our perceptions of the world and of our own consciousness. The ideational function is subdivided into: experiential and logical functions of which the experiential function is largely concerned with content or ideas while the logical function is concerned with the relationships between ideas. The second function language performs as proposed by Haliday is the interpersonal function as it enables us to participate in communicative acts with other people, to take on roles and to express and understand feelings, attitudes and judgments. The third language function is the textual function as language is used to relate what is said or written to the real world and to other linguistic events. This however, involves the use of language to organise the text itself.

From Haliday’s (1994) classification, it is evident that language use varies just as its functions. Language differs in various situations; it can help to foster harmonious relationship between individuals and a group of people in a speech community, in as much as they are aware of the immediate social expectations that they should talk in certain ways so as to avoid conflicts. Therefore, people tend to use euphemism as a form of language so as to communicate effectively in different contexts.

Context as defined by Leech (1983), “is any background knowledge assumed to be shared by the speaker and the hearer which contributes to the hearer’s interpretation of what the speaker means by a given utterance”. Leech, by his definition sees context as a fore-knowledge a speaker and the hearer shares which helps the hearer to easily understand the meaning the speaker tries to convey. Similar to this definition, Malinowski (1946) describes context as “immediate concrete circumstances about what was going on while the words are said”. He further states that the physical environment of a speech event, the participants involved in the discourse as well as the cultural norms are necessary guides for interacts. This definition, just like the first also presents context as all that contributes to the hearers understanding of what the speaker tries to communicate. Language is defined as a means of communicating thoughts, ideas and emotions, but in a situation where all that needs to help the hearer understand the meaning communicated by the speaker (context) is not provided, it is possible to say that communication has not taken place.

According to Wallwork (1974:57), context is the relation of the totality of language to the particular situation or event it is used for. He further says that context often helps in understanding the particular meaning of a word, phrase or utterance. For example: if it is said to a mother whose baby has been crying in Yoruba that ‘*o mọ́ náà ti **dáké***’ the child has kept **quiet**. ‘Quiet’ in this context means the child has stopped crying, but in a context where a child has been very sick in the hospital and the doctor comes in and says ‘*o mọ́ náà ti **dáké***’ the child has kept quiet. ‘Quiet’ in this context means a different thing entirely from the first; it means the child is dead. Thus, the relationship between context and language lies in the fact that language users are able to deduce meanings from the context of use. Context will, to a large extent, aid this study in the interpretation of the euphemisms that are sampled for analysis.



### **2.1.2 The Origin / Etymology of Euphemism**

The word 'Euphemism' is derived from the Greek word "euphemia" meaning, the use of "good omen." It is derived from the Greek root word; "Eu" which means "good, well"; the stem "pheme" meaning "speak" and the suffix "ism" which means "action or result". Etymologically, the word 'Euphemism' means, 'speaking well of...,' 'good speech', and words of 'good omen.' The 'eupheme' was originally a word or phrase used in place of a religious word or phrase that should not be spoken aloud; etymologically, 'eupheme' is the opposite of the word blaspheme (evil speaking). At the early beginnings of language, euphemisms have probably existed at least in the religious aspects. Gods, whether benign or malign had been treated with respect to terror, for example; the ancient Greek term for the furies and the Avenging gods was the 'Eumenides' who was regarded as 'the kindly one' or 'the good humored lady' with the hope that they might be flattered into being less furious. Also, the primary examples of taboo words requiring the use of a euphemism are the unspeakable names for deity, such as Persephone, Hecate, or Nemesis. Euphemism was itself used as a Euphemism by the Greeks, meaning "to keep a holy silence" (speaking well by not speaking at all).

Cited by Wang (2013), the word euphemism was first used in the early 1580's by British writer George Blunt in his *Glossographia* (1656), where he defined it as 'a good or favourable interpretation of a bad word'. According to historical classifications, euphemisms can be divided into; euphemisms in the Victorian age, euphemisms in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and contemporary euphemisms. In contemporary times, euphemisms are divided into temporary euphemisms and persistent euphemisms, such that, some were created on impulse on certain

occasions and were never repeated, while others were coined, reused and ratified by many people and have lasted for generations, even centuries. Similarly, there are also “nonce” euphemisms and the “sustained” euphemisms. For instance, most of the euphemisms connected to the Vietnam War and Watergate incident were one – day wonders, while many euphemisms connected with taboos have become everlasting terms; some have even become idiomatic expressions

Samoskaite (2011), points out that euphemisms generally exist in almost every nation all over the world no matter how civilized. It is a common phenomenon in all natural languages both large families and languages of minorities. Nearly all cultures seem to have certain notions or things that people try to avoid mentioning directly, as such, they employ the use of euphemisms in order to avoid words that may sound painful, rude, offensive and unpleasant. One of the major characteristics of euphemism is its universality as it cuts across all cultures. In Yoruba, which is the language this research focuses on , the word for euphemism is known as “À dápè”, “Àdàsọ”, which means (indirect speaking ), or “À fiyọ Pa Ọrọ”, meaning, rubbing words with salt as it is believed that salt serves as cooling effects. This is just as the Bible puts it in Colossians 4:6, that ‘Let your speech always be seasoned with salt’, which means that we should learn to speak or present our words in a presentable and acceptable manner, which would not hurt or present us as being impolite or rude before our interlocutors. Euphemisms is however seen in the light of this as that which helps to reduce the effects of some words that could sound offensive. Highly dependent on this, the study presents various definitions of euphemisms, its features and classifications.

### **2.1.3 Definitions of Euphemism**

Euphemism according to Leech (1969:139) is “an alternative round-about mode of expression, used in preference to a blunter, less delicate one’, it is often used to veil special taboos or sexual preference. Fowler and Holden (1987: 12), sharing this same view, define euphemism as “the use of mild, vague or periphrastic expressions as substituted for blunt, precision or disagreeable truth”. Euphemism is a form of effective manipulation of the meaning of a word without deviating from what is actually meant. According to Rawson (1981:1) “they are powerful linguistic devices which are embedded so deeply in our language that few of us, even those who pride themselves on being plain spoken ever get through a day without using them.” He went further to say that the need for euphemism is both social and emotional, as it allows discussions such as (sex, personal appearances and religion) and acts as pressure valve whilst maintaining the appearance of civility. This definition presents euphemism as a word or expression which stands in for another word or phrase, chosen to mask or soften the true meaning of what is being expressed.

Asher (1994:1180) considers euphemism as “sounding good, instead of blunt or coarse words”. He also observes that some experiences in people’s lives are too vulnerable to be discussed freely without safe guards; examples of such are major subjects of anxiety or shame as death, the supernatural, sexuality, body parts, and illness among others. He points out that the precise areas of taboo are culture and era specific, and concludes by stating that “Euphemism provides a way of speaking about the unspeakable; it falls down mid-way between transparent discourse and total prohibition”. Asher in his explanation presents euphemism as a form of substitute or an agreeable or less offensive expression in place of one that may offend or suggest something unpleasant to the receiver. Sharing the same view as Asher, Webster’s New Dictionary (2003),

describes euphemism as “a substitution of agreeable or offensive expression for one that may offend or suggest something unpleasant.” Williams (1975) on the other hand, sees euphemism as “a kind of linguistic elevation or amelioration specifically directed toward finding socially acceptable words for concepts that many people cannot easily speak of.” This definition projects euphemism from the perspective of political correctness in which socially acceptable words are used for those that are unacceptable. Euphemism may also be a substitute for the description of something or someone to avoid revealing secret, holy or sacred names to the uninitiated or to obscure the identity of the subject of conversation from eavesdroppers.

Pyatt (2010) in his opinion puts forward that euphemism “is a form / type of indirect language.” Indirect language on the other hand refers to a kind of strategic speech on a particular topic which may be considered forbidden. Similarly, Fromkin and Rodman (1993), also describe it as “a word or phrase that replaces a taboo word or serves to avoid frightening or unpleasant subjects.” It plays a vital role of avoiding taboos and embarrassments as it shows politeness and saves the faces of both sides in communication. The research within the context of this study defines Euphemism as a polite and pleasant means of talking about ideas, concepts, thoughts or things that could be seen as impolite, unpleasant and not widely or socially accepted. This implies that euphemism describes unpleasant expressions in a rather subtle manner so as to avoid ear piercing ones. This is done in an attempt to be polite or save face.

Deduced from these various definitions of euphemism given above, a common word which spans through all the definitions and keeps reoccurring is the word ‘substitution’, which means that one word or expression is usually substituted or replaced for another. In other words, the blunt, harsh, offensive or unpleasant expression is often substituted with, the mild, pleasant, inoffensive expressions. However, it is possible to draw up conclusions that every human

society, including the Yoruba society, has a set of social controls particularly with respect to language use, as there are certain restricted words (taboo words) which are not meant to be spoken or mentioned directly owing to the fact that they are vulgar, frivolous or even less inconsiderate. Cited in Adeyanju (2007) Wardhaugh views taboo as:

One way in which a society expresses its disapproval of certain kinds of behaviour believed to be harmful to its members, either for supernatural reasons or because of such behaviour is held to violate a moral code. Consequently, so far as a language is concerned, certain things are not to be said or certain objects can be referred to only in certain circumstances, for example only by certain people or through deliberate circumlocutions, i.e. euphemistically (230).

In other words, taboos for what they are constitute the root cause for the use of euphemisms; they are the underlying representations of euphemisms as they form a universally acknowledged class of social controls. Thus, if social controls like politeness strategies, taboos, and other interactional laws are to be strictly adhered to by the members of every society, euphemisms, then becomes inevitable, as it pleasantly helps to present concepts that would have sounded blunt or harsh to the ear. It is in the light of this that the study intends to examine the use of euphemisms as an inevitable part of Yoruba Language, since there are sets of social controls (taboo words) which pertains to language use of which there are restrictions as to what one says which requires the use of euphemisms for smooth and successful communication.

Euphemism forms an integral part of every human language and also constitutes a legitimate topic for investigation in the field of linguistics. Cited in Mwanambuyu (2011), Bolinger (1971) observes that language, as an instrument of social communication, takes into account not only the internal patterns of language as a self-contained system but also the manner in which these

patterns relate to the communicative operation of language in use. This view however relates to that of Allan and Corder (1975:90) who state that;

what the learner of the language needs primarily to know, is not so much how to recognize and produce sentences as linguistic object but how to make and understand utterances which expresses certain concepts, perform certain communicative acts and in general enable the learner to participate in interactional processes of normal language.

Osterloh (1986:77) also sharing this same view, puts forward that:

Language is not simply a formal system of sounds, words and syntactic structures but also a way of communication by human, within their beliefs, attitudes, customs, behaviours, and social habits. Each language in society accumulates rules according to which concrete statements are re-interpreted abstractly and are valid through common usage.

Owing to all these, euphemism qualifies to be considered as a form of language used by people in the society for communicative purposes and is regarded as the most important means by which people maintain social relationships. Enright (1985:13) observes that, “without euphemism, the rotation of the world would have stopped rubbing and would have been flooded with feud.” The use of euphemism, in this regard, lubricates language and minimises the possibility of conflict. It is understandable that this observation made by Enright has a direct relevance to this work, because in the Yoruba society, without euphemism, there would have been so many problems, enmity or feud as Enright called it in the course of communicating between interlocutors, because most people with no considerations for the face would speak shabbily, which could stir up enmity. Therefore, it could be argued that the primary objective of euphemism in any language: Yoruba inclusive is to establish social bonds and harmonious relationships amidst interlocutors.

### **2.1.4 Features of Euphemisms**

There are certain features or characteristics that cut across the use of euphemisms in different languages of the world. They are:

#### **1. Indirect and implicit**

Euphemism always gives people hints in a roundabout way. It is possible to infer the deeper meaning intention from the context. For example; if someone dies in the Yoruba society, and it is said that such has slept (ó ti sùn) or has gone home (baba ti relé ), one is able to infer from the context that death is the subject of the discourse.

#### **2. Universality**

Universality is something that is accepted by all people. Though euphemism is indirect and it does not come straight to the point, people can easily infer its deeper implications. For example; in Yoruba Language when one escapes or absconds and it is said euphemistically that such has spoken to his legs, “ba ẹ̀sẹ̀ rẹ̀ sòrò”, it is usually understood by all who speak and understand the language what it actually means.

#### **3. Regional feature**

In the use of euphemism, there are some regional differences, for example, an Australian woman married to an American man. They spent their honeymoon in America. And one day, the couple intended to go for a party together. But the bridegroom couldn't find a suitable full dress. The bride took out the Birthday suit that she gave to him as a present few days ago; and said; ‘why not wear your birthday suit?’ However, the whole family all became all astonished because in American English, “in ones birthday suit” is an expression of ‘naked’. This embarrassing situation resulted from the regional differences in the use of euphemism.

Having seen the features of euphemisms as it is found in all euphemisms in the various languages of the world including Yoruba which is the language under study, there is a need to look at its various classifications as they are used in every aspect of humans.

### **2.1.5 Classification of Euphemisms**

This has to do with the grouping of euphemisms into various categories according to the characteristics of their referents or in some cases according to their meaning. Rawson (1981), explains that there are three main categories of euphemisms; positive euphemism, negative euphemism and metaphorical euphemism.

#### **Positive Euphemism**

Rawson (1981:1), explains that positive euphemisms are referred to as stylistic or exaggerating (hyperbole) euphemisms, those which “inflate and magnify, making the euphemised items seem altogether grander and more important than they really are.” This is usually done in order to avoid thrills and to be polite or to achieve co-operation. Mwanambuyu (2011), cites that the British and the Americans for instance, especially the contemporary Americans prefer using this technique of exaggeration to euphemise something unpleasant or embarrassing. Thus, they prefer the use of fancy occupational titles which save the egos of the workers by elevating their job status; for example, euphemisms like ‘visual engineer’ is used for window cleaner, ‘personal assistant to the secretary (special activities)’ for cook, ‘C.P.A’ in place of car parking attendant, ‘cemetery operative’ for grave digger, ‘environmental officers, rodent officers or exterminating engineers’ for rat catchers, hair dressers also refer to themselves as ‘beauticians.’ In modern times, many euphemisms have emerged in regards to people’s ideologies, values and



ways of thinking, especially in a way to show respect for others. However, it is worth mentioning that a number of positive words have been created.

### **Negative Euphemisms**

Negative euphemisms according to Rawson (ibid), are those which “deflate, diminish and are defensive in nature, offsetting the power of tabooed terms and otherwise eradicating from the language, things people prefer not to deal with directly.” In other words, negative euphemisms may be referred to as traditional euphemisms or narrowing euphemisms; they are extremely old and closely connected to taboos. They are like two faces of the coin, such that they refer to the same entity despite their varying looks, with euphemism having much more pleasant face than taboo. Taboo as explained earlier is something people do not want to talk about because it is seen as something fearful or offensive. However, many of these euphemisms arose during a period when it was considered as offensive to mention body parts on subjects that are related to sex, body, wastes or other topics that could conjure up unpleasant or unsettling images, thus ‘private’ meaning ‘private parts’ eliminated the need to use correct name for male or female genitals. Similarly, other terms evolved to mask a broad range of matters directly or indirectly relating to sexual intercourse. Such euphemisms remove shame or disgrace, for example;

Burst – Breast

Buttocks – Ass

Call girl – Whore

Buxom – Big breasted

Hooker – Prostitute

Period - Menstrual period

Carnal Knowledge - Sexual Intercourse.

## **Metaphorical Euphemisms**

Metaphor is a figure of speech as well as a common way of human thinking that exists in many languages, it is an expression that ordinarily designates one concept – its literal meaning – but is used to designate another concept, thus creating an implicit comparison. Cited in Samoskaite (2011:16) a multitude of colourful metaphorical euphemisms surround the word ‘menstruation,’ as it centres around ‘red’; for example, ‘the Calvary has come’- a reference to the red coasts of the British Calvary, ‘it’s a red lettered day’ and ‘flying the red flag’. Other metaphorical euphemisms include ‘globes’ for brown eyes and ‘melons’ for breasts. Euphemisms for ‘death’ are also composed of metaphors, such as; in English ‘going to his last home,’ ‘to sleep long / eternal,’ ‘never ending sleep’ ‘to rest in peace/ to be at rest’ ‘has gone to heaven,’. In the Holy Bible, the Old Testament reflected the state of being dead to ‘sleep’ which sounds like a way of avoiding the use of the frightening phrase ‘to die’. Also, in the book of Genesis 3:19b, there was the reference to death where God placed a curse on Adam, ‘... till thou return unto the ground; for out of it was thou taken, for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.’ The phrases “going back to the dust”, was used as a euphemism for dying.

The study however, in the light of the classifications of euphemisms presented above seeks to look into the use of euphemisms in Yoruba Language; putting them into the various categories they belong for better understanding.

In addition to the classification of euphemisms as explained by Rawson, other scholars have also been able to classify euphemisms into different types and forms of creation. (Compose, William (1985), Shipely (1977), Newman and Silver; Allan and Burrige (1991).

- **Shortening:** when certain restricted words are encountered, which we dare not pronounce or talk about, we tend to replace them with a shortened word. This involves certain processes such as;
  - a. **Abbreviation:** Rawson (1981) explains this as a process through which words that may create dismay if used in the public are shortened to their initial letters for acceptability. For example, words like ‘GD’ is used for goddamn, ‘ SOB’ for son of a bitch, ‘ BS’ for bullshit, ‘ BFD’ for big fucking deal, ‘ MOF’ for mother fucker, ‘BH’ for boko haram e.t.c.
  - b. **Apocopation:** Shipely (1977) sees this process as a way to shorten or omit the last syllable of a word such as; ‘vamp’ for vampire, ‘what the ----’ for what the hell.
  - c. **Back form:** Newman and Silver (1983) explain this as a process which involves the substitution of one part of a speech with the shortened form for another. For example, the word ‘burgle’, which is derived from burglar, serves as euphemism for rob.
  - d. **Diminutive:** this form is explained by Williams (1975) as a process of forming a new term by shortening a name and adding a suffix; for example, the word ‘buttocks’ is euphemized by ‘heinie’ which is the diminutive of ‘hind end’.
  - e. **Omission:** this has to do with leaving out the letters of taboo words after the initial such as ‘f’ for having sex ‘fuck’ or ‘ s’ instead of ‘shit’. Allan Burridge (1991).
  - f. **Clipping:** Shipely explains clipping as a process by which some part of a longer word is deleted to give a shorter word with the same meaning. For example the word ‘bra’ for brassiere, ‘jeez’ for Jesus Christ, ‘ladies’ for ladies room, ‘gents’ for gentlemen.

- **Abstractions:** In Rawson's words some words (it problem, situation and things), help cast ideas in the widest possible terms and make ideal cover up words. For instance; 'going to the other side' for death, 'the situation' for pregnancy, 'do it or come together' in reference to sexual act.
- **Litotes or Reserved Understatement:** Here euphemism is created by replacing a word with a negative expression of its opposites, thus, we may say; 'not exactly thin' for (fat), 'not completely truthful' for (lied), 'untidy or unclean' for (dirty), 'not bad' for (fair), 'unwise' for (foolish). Brook (1981).
- **Indirection:** too touchy topics may be alluded to, in various ways; by mentioning one aspect of the subject, a circumstance involving it, a related subject or even by saying what it is not. Here a Euphemism may replace an explicit description of an action. For instance; the word 'assembly centre' may be used for prison. Other words like; behind, unmentionables, privates, sleep together or sub-naval activities can also be used.
- **Personification:** this is one form of euphemism where things people prefer not to mention candidly such as; genitals are assigned personal names. For instance; the male genitals could be referred to as 'thing'.
- **Slang:** this has to do with the use of less harsh term with similar meaning, for instance; 'screwed up' is a euphemism for 'fucked up, 'hook up or laid' is also used for sexual intercourse.
- **Circumlocution:** euphemisms can also be formed through periphrasis or circumlocution which means to 'speak around' a given word, implying it without saying it. This has to do with the use of many words to say something that could be said more clearly and directly by using fewer words, it is an evasion in speech, the use of an unnecessarily large number of words to express an idea and to avoid saying it directly. Allan and Burridge (1991) calls circumlocution the use

of longer expressions, euphemisms which have more letters and syllables used in place of a single one. For example;

‘Post secondary material’ for ‘garbage’.

‘Excrementitiously human kidney’ for ‘urine’.

‘Solid human waste’ for ‘feaces’.

As enumerated above, euphemisms are formed in English Language through these various processes, but certain features like shortening might not be found in Yoruba euphemisms as there are no acronyms. In Yoruba Language most euphemisms are birth through abstractions, litotes, indirection, personification, slangs and circumlocution.

According to Samoskaite (2011:13), euphemisms can also be subdivided into six semantic categories based on the subject/topic they deal with. They are:

- Profession euphemisms (which refer to jobs/professions)
- Disease euphemisms (which refer to illnesses)
- Death euphemisms
- Sex euphemisms
- Crime euphemisms
- Political euphemisms (which refer to political issues)

Euphemism is a social phenomenon, which relates to all aspect of human behaviour. In Yoruba Language, it cuts across different spheres of humans such as; occupation, disease, death, animals, sex, crime, politics, dressing, name, birth, royalty and all other aspects that are taboo related. Euphemisms appear to have been in use for a very long time as a social device, it is used for various reasons such as; a desire to be polite, a desire to be vague or conceal information when talking in public and a desire to replace crude or inappropriate language.

However, certain reasons trigger the use of euphemisms in communicative exchanges; it is not used only to bring aesthetics to speech, but is used based on certain reasons enumerated below;

- It is majorly created as a lubricating language to avoid offensive, harsh, embarrassing or disgusting situations or terms; using more gentle or delicate term.
- Euphemisms are also created as ways to communicate broad subject ideas with simple words that carry powerful messages.
- They are created to bypass certain taboos or censorship laws.
- They are created as important means in coordinating interpersonal relationships among people.
- Euphemisms are created to save faces of both speakers and addressees and even third party during conversations.
- They are created in an attempt to make polite references to physical or psychological disability.
- Euphemisms are created to accord respect to people.
- They are also created to diminish the public perception of the seriousness of certain conditions.

In modern society, the motivation for the creation of euphemisms has changed, it is not usually with the fear not to mention certain words like taboo words, but is more concerned with not harming or offending the sensibilities of any parties involved. In Yoruba Language, Euphemisms are both used for the fear not to mention certain words that are taboo related and to be polite. According to Farb (1974) the creation of euphemisms in the Yorùbá speech community can be attributed to reasons such as; to show respect and politeness, to exhibit shyness, to avoid being vulgar, to show love, and affection or courtesy. He further states that

euphemisms are usually employed by people because of the fear certain things evoke, thus they try to avoid talking about them by replacing them with euphemisms. For instance; direct mentioning of the name of earthly gods and other lesser deities, death and certain diseases. Yoruba euphemisms just as in English can be looked at from various angles such as; metaphor, substitution of words or phrase or used as a way of avoiding taboo words.

### **2.1.6 Language and Communication**

One of the basic uses of language is to communicate information; this function is so basic that many people regard it as the only function of language. It is therefore common to come across claims that language is the means by which members of the society communicate or language is a system of communication.

As a medium of communication, language can be used to affirm or refute propositions, present arguments or make suggestions and so on. Language is thus, used to describe our world and our reasoning.

### **2.1.7 Linguistic Relativity**

This concept is anchored on the view that the structure of a language affects its speaker's world view or cognition, in that it is claimed that speakers organise their thinking to meet the demands of their language during speech. The view is usually associated with the linguist, Edward Sapir and his student Whorf, which can be traced back to other scholars, particularly Humboldt in the nineteenth century. Wardhaugh (2006) explains that this view is referred to as the Linguistic Relativity, Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis or the Whorfian Hypothesis, since the claim seems to owe much more to Whorf than it does to Sapir. Whorf extended his idea further than that of Sapir as an echo of Humboldt's view that "languages contained the key to understanding the differing

world views of people". This was captured in Sapir's view that because of the staggering differences in the grammatical systems of languages, no two languages were ever similar enough to allow for a perfect translation between them. He also thought that because language represented reality differently speakers of different languages would perceive reality differently. However, differently from Sapir and Humboldt, Whorf went further to look into the Native American Languages with an attempt to account for the ways in which differences in grammatical systems and language use affects the ways their speakers perceived the world. Thus in his view, he stated that;

we dissect nature along lines laid down by our native language...on the contrary the world is presented in kaleidoscope flux of impressions which has to be organised by our minds- and this means largely by the linguistic systems of our minds. We cut nature up, organise it into concepts and ascribe significances as we do largely because we are parties to an agreement to organise it in this way - an agreement that holds throughout our speech community and is codified in the patterns of our language [...] all observers are not led by the same physical evidence to the same picture of the universe, unless their linguistic backgrounds are similar, or can in some way be calibrated Carroll (1956).

Euphemisms are effective, because they replace the trigger (the offending word form) by another word form that expresses a similar idea. This explains the fact that word forms exert some control and affect our cognition. As a result, we are motivated by our emotions such that we organise our behaviour, thoughts, and goals in order to avoid emotional discomfort, to the extent that it is difficult to talk about an issue without employing emotionally conditioned expressions for words we might be expected to avoid (not to think about) even when the underlying message is not negative.



## 2.2 The Concept of Pragmatics

Research on Pragmatics dates back to the ancient Greece and Rome where the term “Pragmaticus” is found in the late Latin and “Pragmatkos” in Greek, with both having the meaning ‘being practical.’ The origin of modern Pragmatics is attributable to Morris (1938) a philosopher who is concerned with the study of the science of signs or Semiotics. He sees Pragmatics as an aspect of Semiotics which is from the Greek word “Pragma” meaning ‘deed or action’, (Encyclopedia American: 1994, vols 22:514). According to Morris, Semiotics comprises three broad branches namely:

- a. Syntax; being the formal relation of signs to one another.
- b. Semantics; being the formal relation of signs to what they refer.
- c. Pragmatics as being the formal relation of signs to their interpreters.

Pragmatics oftentimes poses a great challenge to linguists around the world owing to the fact that it is difficult to specify the actual domain of meaning. Pragmatics covers a subfield of linguistics as it cuts across a range of related disciplines such as; Sociolinguistics, Psycholinguistics, Communication and so many others. Therefore, the possibility of providing an all encompassing definition of Pragmatics seems to be a difficult task though it has been defined differently by scholars from their various perspectives. According to Kempson (1986:151) Pragmatics is “the study of the general cognitive principle involved in the retrieval of information from an utterance”. This definition only projects Pragmatics from a Psycholinguistic perspective as involving some mental processes or activities. It is however contrary to that given by Morris (1938) who relates Pragmatics to Syntax and Semantics as an aspect of Semiotics.

Leech and Short (1987:290) with a different opinion from that of Kempson buttressed the definition of Pragmatics given by Morris by stating that; The Pragmatic analysis of language can be broadly understood to be the investigation into that aspect of meaning which is derived not from the formal properties of words and constructions, but from the way in which utterances are used and how they relate to the context in which they are uttered. This definition presents Pragmatics as an aspect of meaning drawn not from grammar but from how utterances are used by the speaker in a particular context. Pragmatics is often described as the study of language use as contrasted with the study of language structure, Wales (1989:365) sharing this view, also define Pragmatics as the study of language use, which is concerned with the meaning of utterance rather than a grammatical sentence or proposition.

According to Yule, Pragmatics is the study of speaker meaning; the focus here is mainly on the interpretation of what people mean by their utterances rather than what the phrases in the utterances mean by themselves. Pragmatics also aims at investigating the invisible meaning: how what the unsaid is recognised to be a relevant part of a conversation. The proportion of what is said and unsaid is determined by a physical, social or conceptual distance. In this respect, Pragmatics is the study of the expression of relative distance. Thus, his definition of Pragmatics could be summarised in the following ways; Pragmatics is the study of speaker meaning, contextual meaning, the expression of relative distance, and the study of how more gets communicated than is said (Yule, 1996).

Levinson (1983:25) also sees Pragmatics as the study of the ability of language users to pair sentences with the context in which they are used. Pragmatics is the study of how contextual factors interact with linguistic meaning in the interpretation of meaning. Pragmatics is mostly implied meanings, not directly deduced from what is said, but from the context of use and

conventional usage. In Yoruba Language, the use of euphemistic expressions is usually based on shared background knowledge of the interlocutors, without which a breakdown in communication is inevitable. Also, such knowledge of when, where and how a piece of language is being used will also help the listeners or interpreters in the exchange to know the situation or context of use for better understanding of what has been said with the use of euphemism by the speaker.

Denham and Lobeck (2010:331) shed a brighter light on this by stating that the meaning of an utterance “is bound up with the context in which you hear it - where you are , what you are doing, who says it, what kind of experiences you have had, your cultural expectations and so on”. They maintained that “how speaker intention and hearer interpretation affect meaning is the subject of Pragmatics which is a study of utterance meaning or how the meanings of the things they say are shaped by context”. This explains how important the concept of context is to Pragmatics, as it is impossible to talk about Pragmatics without context.

### **2.2.1 Context**

Context is a very important aspect of Pragmatics and all that could be discussed in the field of Pragmatics revolves around it. It is not an easy scope to define as one must consider first the social and psychological world in which language users operate in at any given time (Ochs1979 in Levinson 1983). Ochs (1974) expatiates further by saying that context includes minimally, language users, beliefs and assumptions about temporal, spatial and social setting.

According to Malinowski (1946) context is the “immediate concrete circumstances about what was going on while the words are said”. He further states that the physical environment of a

speech event, the participants involved in the discourse as well as the cultural norms are necessary guides for interacts. Mey (2001:39) also sharing the same view as Malinowski, describes context as “the continually changing surroundings in the widest sense, that enable the participants in the communication process to interact and in which the linguistic expression becomes intelligible. Hymes (1964) identified some of the features of context to be;

- a. Participants: this involves the speaker or writer in a speech event who usually takes the role of the addressor; then the hearer or reader who also takes the role of the addressee and a third party listening or overhearing as the audience. According to Hymes, it plays a contributory role to the context of situation.
- b. Topic: this concerns what is being talked about. The analyst must be familiar with the topic for discussion or subject matter for a proper interpretation.
- c. Setting: here many issues are involved such as: where? In terms of the place the speech event is taking place, when? In terms of the time the event is taking place, even the physical relations of participants with regards to facial expressions, gesture, and posture are contributory factor to the interpretation.
- d. Channel: this has to do with the medium employed in the speech event, is it speech, writing, sign or a smoke signal?
- e. Code: this concerns the language, dialect or style being used in the speech event.
- f. Message form: this involves the form the event is taking, is it a chat, debate, storytelling, sermon, campaign? The realisation of this form helps in the interpretation.

Therefore, for a smooth and successful communication, targeted intended speaker meaning of an utterance, there is a need for both speakers and listeners to share a series of common knowledge enumerated above. Also, in using euphemisms in Yoruba Language, it is expected

that a common or shared knowledge exists between the speakers and the listeners for it to achieve its aim and for the speaker not to look stupid and appear as saying something entirely different from the subject matter . For instance , in Yoruba a thief is called ‘olè ’, but when euphemised, one can say “alá fowórá” (shoplifting) the direct translation could be ‘one whose hands makes things disappear’. Here, the euphemism used by the speaker has lessened the effect of the crime but understanding the euphemistic expression used, largely depends on the shared knowledge already in existence between the interlocutors, which might be gibberish to one who has no knowledge of Yoruba euphemisms. This study therefore looks into the ways and manners, the Yorùbas from a Pragmatic perspective use euphemisms to foster smooth communication among interlocutors. It also explores the use of some identified euphemisms in some particular contexts and the appropriateness of its usage taking into cognisance the common background shared by the speakers.

When language is used by human beings in real-life situations, aside the context or circumstances of which the words are being said, there are generally communicative goals associated with every utterance. Speakers express their emotions, ask questions, make requests, and commit themselves to actions - they *do things* with words (Saeed 2003). In Pragmatics, the term **Speech Act** is used to describe such language actions. This brings us to another theory of Pragmatics; the Speech Act Theory, within the framework of which there is the Indirect Speech Act, which relates to euphemism as another indirect form of expressing ones thoughts.

### **2.2.2. The Speech Act Theory**

Echoing the view of Saeed (2003), learning to communicate in a language involves more than acquiring the pronunciation and grammar; there’s a need to learn how to ask questions, make suggestions, greet and thank other speakers. There is also a need to learn the uses to which

utterances are conventionally put in the new language community and how these uses are signaled. Such functions of language as Saeed describes it are captured in the terminology introduced by Austin (1975) as Speech Acts.

The Speech Act Theory is one of the major components of Pragmatics which considers language as performing some communicative acts. It was developed by the Oxford philosopher J.L Austin whose (1955) lectures at Harvard University were published posthumously as “How to do Things with Words” in 1962. Ever since then, it has greatly developed to the extent that there is a large literature. One of the most important proponents of Speech Acts has been the philosopher, Searle (1969, 1975, 1976), and within linguistic studies and surveys are scholars such as; Saddock (1974), Cole and Morgan (1975), Bach and Harnish (1979), Garzdar (1981) and Sadock and Zwicky (1985).

The Speech Act Theory developed mainly as an opposition by Austin (1975) to some views proposed by the philosophers known as the logical positivist views that;

- a) The basic sentence type in language is declarative (i.e. statement or assertion).
- b) The principal use of language is to describe states of affairs (by using statements).
- c) The meaning of utterances can be described in terms of their truth or falsity. Such utterances were described as ‘Constatives’.

In Austin’s (1975) opposition to this view, he came up with the proposition that language is employed to perform tasks far more than just making statements and that for the most part, utterances cannot be said to be either true or false. However, he made two observations; first that not all sentences are statements, and that much of conversation is made up of questions,

exclamations, commands, expressions and wishes. Austin (1975) proposed the concept 'performatives' which implies that by each utterance made, a speaker not only says something, but also does certain things or performs certain actions, such as; giving information, stating a fact or making a request. It indicates the issuing of an utterance is the performing of an action. As such, utterances such as; I promise, I declare, I hereby, I bet are performatives which can either be explicit or implicit.

He notes that for these performatives to achieve their performative function as speech act, certain contextual conditions must be met or fulfilled; these are called the felicity conditions. According to Austin (1975) an utterance produced by a speaker conveys three layers of meaning which are interrelated to one another; first is the literal meaning of an utterance produced by the speaker, the second is the speaker's intention conveyed in the utterance, while the third is the effect that the utterance has on the hearer. These three acts are concurrently performed in an utterance. The first is the **Locutionary Act**; it is the basic act of utterance or an act of producing a meaningful linguistic expression. The second is the **Illocutionary Act**, this is performed via communicative force and can be said to be the actual intention of the speaker; might be asserting, ordering, rebuking, and questioning e.t.c. The third refers to the effect achieved by saying something, that is the actual effect of the locutionary act on the hearer or listeners (i.e. persuading, commanding). It could be an intended or unintended consequence of a reaction of what is said. It is termed the **Perlocutionary act**.

Austin (1962:109) went further to classify Speech Acts according to their illocutionary acts which are; verdictives, exercitives, commissives, behabitives, expositives. Searle (1976) in an attempt to improve on Austin's effort put forward a taxonomy of illocutionary acts which are

representatives, directives, commissives, expressives and declarations which are not totally different from that proposed by Austin. However within the framework of Speech Act Theory, it is possible to say that in the course of using euphemistic expressions, certain illocutionary acts often takes place, such as; asserting, declaring, warning, admonishing, consoling, and questioning e.t.c.

### **Indirect Speech Act**

In everyday situations, what is intended are often not directly expressed but instead utterances are formulated in ways which may appear more polite to hearers. Indirect speech act is when a statement is used to perform an action such as; request, permission or apology other than its direct implication. Saeed’s opinion (1997) holds that a Direct Speech Act refers to the conventionality expected function while the Indirect Speech Act refers to the extra actual function. Saeed went further to state examples as follows;

<b>UTTERANCE</b>	<b>DIRECT ACT</b>	<b>INDIRECT ACT</b>
Would you mind passing me the ash tray.	Question	Request
I must ask you to leave my house.	Statement	request or order
Leave me and I will jump into the river.	Order and statement	Threat

(Saeed, 2003:231).

Another example to explain an indirect act is found in a question such as; “Do you have some money?” (To a friend who is alighting from a taxi). Here the direct act is a question, but the indirect speech act is a request (Osisanwo 2003). According to Searle (1969) the importance of



indirect speech act is being responsible for sentence meaning and speakers meaning which may be somewhat different. Searle (1979) defines direct speech act as utterances whereby sentence meaning is consistent with the speaker meaning, but the problem posed by the indirect speech act is the question of how possible it is for the hearer to understand and recognise the indirect act when the sentence he hears and understands means something different entirely. Searle (1979:49) points out possible answers and solution to this by saying that “the speaker communicates to the hearer more than he or she actually says by way of relying on their mutual shared background knowledge both linguistics and non linguistics, together with the general power of reality and inference on the part of the hearer.

Euphemism, however, is another way of presenting thoughts indirectly so as to conceal certain information or to avoid offensive or embarrassing situations. This in turn relates to Pyatt (2010), who describes euphemism as a form or type of indirect language. Therefore it is possible to say that both terms; Indirect Speech Act and Euphemism perform related functions as some of the strategies of being polite in communicative exchanges.

Grice (1975: 62) proposes an approach called the ‘Cooperative Principle’. This refers to the Quasi- agreement speakers enter into as they perform Speech Act. They are certain principles which guide the speaker or hearer in order to make right references and interpret meaning beyond the linguistic content of an utterance to bring about effective communication. The approach simply explains that a conversation will go on smoothly and successfully if the speakers on both sides hold a co-operative attitude. However, it is believed that in order to guarantee successful communication, there should be some norms or beliefs shared by speakers and listeners to aid smooth conversation and to avoid a breakdown in communication. As put forward by Grice (1975, 1978), they are conversational principles called maxims. They include:

***The Maxim of Quantity:*** this relates to the amount of information to be provided

1. Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange).
2. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

***The Maxim of Quality***

Try to make your contribution one that is true.

1. Do not say what you believe to be false.
2. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

***The Maxim of Relevance (relation)***

Make your contributions relevant.

***The Maxim of Manner;*** be perspicuous and specifically:

1. Avoid obscurity of expression.
2. Avoid ambiguity
3. be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity)
4. be orderly.

Yule (1996) expatiates that, it is important to recognise that these maxims are unstated assumptions that are present in conversations. The assumption is that people are normally going to provide an appropriate amount of information; we assume that they are telling the truth, they are being relevant and trying to be as clear as they can (Yule, 1996; 37). Here, we can say that Grice was suggesting standard behaviour in conversations. However, in the words of Davis (2000) when an utterance appears not to be in conformity to this model, we do not assume such is nonsense, rather we assume that an appropriate meaning is there to be inferred. This brings us to another aspect in Grice's postulation, namely **Implicature**.

Grice (1975), notes that in daily conversations, what is suggested in an utterance is usually distinct from what the speaker literally says or writes, as people do not usually say things directly but tend to imply or suggest them. According to Yang (2008:59), implicature is when

speakers are able to mean more than what is actually said. Thus, it is an additional, unstated meaning which the speaker implies. Implicature works where there is cooperation between speaker and hearer; it focuses on how speakers and hearers of a language get along cooperatively and politely. Thus, echoing Horn's definition, implicature is a component of the speaker's meaning that constitutes an aspect of what is meant in a speaker's utterance without being part of what is said (Horn 1992). It is when the maxims are either observed or violated that an implication is triggered.

There are two types of implicature; the conventional and the conversational implicature. The study focuses on the latter as opposed to the former which is referred to as linguistic items in an utterance, meaning it is conveyed by the conventional meaning of words and predicated on the general shared knowledge of the meaning of an utterance. Yule (1996:45) states that it does not; (i) depend on Cooperative Principle (ii) have to occur in conversation (iii) depend on special context for their interpretation. The latter refers to pragmatic inferences which arise from contextual factors. It no doubt, thrives on cooperation between the two interactants. Grice presents conversational implicature as relying solely on Cooperative Principles; hence it is supported by the four maxims. However, Yang (2008) notes that there are cases of failure of conversational implicature because of different reasons. The reasons could be of linguistic nature (that is, the linguistic form) or it could be because of the failure to understand the speaker's real intentions or the misunderstanding of idioms or euphemisms of the language. The maxims that are outlined above or more precisely their violation forms the basis of inferences that we draw in conversations. This is often the case, whenever euphemism is employed in conversations and one or more maxim is flouted, the listener is left to make inferences about what is meant

differently from what is said. For instance, in Yoruba Language if a statement such as this is made;

“Èsọra pẹ̀lú ẹ̀rù yin o, ọmọ náà **nfe ọwọ**’

(Litt. trans.) Watch with load your, the child is **blow hand**

Watch your load, the child *steals*.

Here, the speaker with the use of the euphemism flouts the quality and relation maxims as the literal meaning is a lie, in that the action said to be performed by the child is false and does not correlate with watching the load, but the speaker expects the listener to infer that he means the child steals which is the implied meaning, but might not want to say that directly, due to some reasons of being polite. However, it is observed that people sometimes choose to flout a maxim intentionally, This view was raised by Leech (1983) that CP in itself cannot explain (a) why people are often so indirect in conveying what they mean... thereby, proposing the notion that CP cannot be satisfactorily explained. It is for this reason that the Politeness Principle can be introduced as a complement necessary to the Cooperative Principle, which saves the CP from serious trouble.

### **2.2.3 Politeness Theory**

There are several ways to think of politeness; it might involve ideas like being tactful, modest or being nice to people. The most influential theory of politeness was first formulated in (1978) and revised in (1987) by Brown and Levinson, which has towered above most others as it served as a guiding beacon for scholars interested in politeness phenomena from the perspectives of human interaction. Politeness has been examined by different scholars from various perspectives. Scholars like Locher and Watts (2005) sees it as discursive and relational

and the likes of Fraser (1990:233) maintain that it is a state of which a speaker maintains a ‘conversational contract’. Goffman (1967) also presents it as a notion of face, where the face is projected as “the public self image” that every member of society wants to claim for himself, such that in social interactions we are obliged to protect our own face and the faces of others.

Despite the divergences as regards to the different views on Politeness Theory, a fundamental aspect that spans through all these views is the maintenance of harmony, cooperation and Social equilibrium, which is described by Spencer-Oatey (2000, 2002, 2005) cited in Sani (2012) as ‘rapport management’. Brown and Levinson see politeness in an interaction as the means employed to show the awareness of another’s face. However, Lakoff (1973) and Leech (1983), labeled it as a ‘social maxim approach’ of which they proposed certain politeness maxims such as; tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement and sympathy, fashioned against the maxims (relation, manner, quality, quantity) proposed by Grice (1975).

- I. Tact Maxim: (in Impositives and commissives)  
(a.) Minimises cost to others [(b.) Maximises benefit to others].
- II. Generosity Maxim: (In impositives and commissives)  
(a.) Minimises benefit to self [(b.) Maximises cost to self]
- III. Approbation Maxim: (in expressives and assertives)  
(a.) Minimises dispraise of others [(b.) Maximises praise of others]
- IV. Modesty Maxim: (in expressives and assertives)  
(a.) Minimises praise of self [(b.) Maximises dispraise of self]
- V. Agreement Maxim: (in assertives)  
(a.) Minimises disagreement between self and others [(b.) Maximises agreement between self and others]
- VI. Sympathy maxim: ( in assertives)  
(a.) Minimises antipathy between self and other [(b.) Maximises sympathy between self and others].

Politeness just like tact, functions as grease that lubricates our communication with others as it helps to earn respect if emphasis is on face saving. However, it should be noted that “rules for polite behaviour differ from one speech community to another; (it is) culturally determined (as)... speech communities emphasise different functions, and express particular functions differently” Holmes (1992:285).

#### **2.2.4 Politeness and Euphemism**

Politeness just like euphemism plays important role in human communication as it is viewed as one of the major social constraints on human interaction that regulates participants’ communicative behaviour, by constantly reminding them to take the consideration of the feelings of others, an aspect which is necessary so as to establish levels of mutual comfort and promote good rapport that will in turn facilitate human communication. Euphemism falls under the category of politeness as Allan and Burridge (2006:30) describes that they “are round about expressions that are strongly related to politeness....” They both mask truths that are found to be unpleasant, therefore, they can be seen as a mutually dependent phenomenon in the sense that, the need to be polite determines euphemistic use in a considerable way, which explains one of the main functions of euphemism as it serves polite function to avoid inelegant things and make people feel pleasant and comfortable.

From the foregoing, it is glaring that euphemism and politeness are mutually dependent phenomena universal in communication in the sense that the need to be polite in communication determines euphemistic use in a considerable way and the indirectness euphemism provides, in turn contributes to avoid offence or that which is unpleasant as a means to insure politeness, in its double dimension (positive and negative face). Therefore, they are interrelated concepts aimed at a common goal which is social harmony, or rapport in communication. The current

study within the framework of all that has been discussed under the topical review intends to examine how possible it is for the users of Yoruba to achieve politeness and effective communication in their use of euphemisms.

### **2.3. Review of Previous Study**

In recent past many scholars from different parts of the world such as; Adeyanju (2001), Fernandez (2006), Qadi (2009), Samoskaite (2011), Nwanambuyu (2011), Saka (2011), Mukaro (2013), Xiao- yan (2014), and Xin (2015) have investigated Euphemism as a form of language used in various societies, in different languages and in various countries due to the fact that it is a prominent phenomenon in language use.

Adeyanju (2001), carries out the research on the use of Euphemisms in Nigerian English. The work examines the euphemistic expressions in educated Nigerian English usage from a sociolinguistic perspective. Two methods were used for data elicitation; the formal interview and participatory observation. The analysis was based on Dell Hyme's ethnography of communication, of which it was revealed, first that; English in Nigeria is made to comply with the people's interactional norms such as the expression of euphemism and politeness phenomenon. Secondly, that euphemism are not only inevitable, but are used to protect the integrity of speakers and hearers and thirdly that euphemism has serious pedagogical implications for the teaching of English in Nigeria. The Similarity this work shares with the current study lies in the fact that euphemism is presented as a set of universally acknowledged social controls which guide people's use of language. The difference however, lies in the fact that Adeyanju takes a sociolinguistic approach to studying the use of euphemisms while the current study is a pragmatic study, which seems deeper as it dives into the contexts of use, speech acts performed and politeness maxims adhered in the use of euphemism by speakers.

Fernandez (2006) writes on “The Language of Death” as he analysed the euphemistic use of Language on obituary pages from the mid-nineteenth century. The study traced an account of the different conceptual metaphors aiming at substituting the notion of death and dying in Irish early Victorian newspapers within the framework of the well-known Conceptual Metaphor Theory initiated by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). It was revealed that many of the metaphors rely on Christian beliefs that those who have died will enjoy a better life in Heaven and also that religion inspires a positive view of death and a negative view of earthly life. This study relates to the current study as it presents death as a timeless taboo, which cannot be discussed without linguistic safeguards. This is a concept the current study shares as it also presents certain expressions or words that require linguistic safeguards when put to use. However, one of the differences between these works is predicated on the fact that Fernandez only focused on Death euphemisms unlike the current work which spans through all other aspects for which euphemisms are used.

Qadi (2009) from a sociolinguistic perspective makes a comparison of the use of euphemisms in English and Arabic Languages. The aim of the study was to majorly highlight euphemisms in English comparing them with those in Arabic. This was done due to the fact the Arabic speakers were in dire need of English language, since it was one of the basic world languages. His findings confirmed that most euphemisms in both languages are utilized negatively, therefore he presented a number of euphemisms in both English and Arabic; one of such is the word “poverty” euphemized as “low income” in English, which is ‘fagr’ in Arabic and is euphemized as ‘daxil mahdu:d’. Qadi in the course of his study also notes that euphemisms are either conscious or unconscious. The researcher was able to pick out the similarities and differences in



the use of euphemism in both languages and was able to discover that the degree of politeness is more pronounced in Arabic than it was in English, since it is overt while Arabic is covert.

This research though from a sociolinguistic perspective, shares some similarities with the current study as it presents euphemism as a linguistic politeness strategy which conveys a social attitude in that it is used as a protective shield in order to safely avoid taboo words for which alternative words are often used so as not to hurt anyone. However, the difference lies in the fact that the study is a comparative analysis of the use of euphemisms in both Arabic and English languages, as opposed to the current study which focuses on just Yoruba language.

Samoskaite (2011) from a different perspective bases her work on political euphemisms that are used in English news papers of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, by analysing their semantic structural features. The objectives of the analysis are to examine theoretical approaches and studies concerning the concept and features of euphemisms; to identify the political euphemisms used in today's English news papers; to group euphemisms into classes according to their semantic features and to analyse their structural and semantic peculiarities. Political euphemisms are approached from semantic structure and pragmatic points of view. The research method is a descriptive and content analysis method from a qualitative perspective as it majorly focuses on the meanings found in certain situations. Materials were gathered from the online English newspaper "The Guardian" of which 70 political newspapers was subjected to analysis. B. Warren's model was applied in studying the structural and the semantic features of these political euphemisms.

The results of the research shows that the use of euphemisms was a major characteristics of political texts which implies that politicians cover up the true nature of political events as they deceive people with nice-sounding words. The analysis also reveals that political euphemisms perform pragmatic functions such as politeness, taboo, covering up, inducing, and tact. The study

however is different from the current study in the research design, and theoretical framework as political euphemisms were analysed using both semantic and pragmatic views with B. Warren's model which was used in analyzing the structural and semantic features, but is still relevant to the study as it benefits from its conceptual features and classifications of euphemisms.

Mwanambuyu (2011) examines Silozi Euphemisms from a Socio-Pragmatic perspective, within the framework of the theories of sociolinguistics and Pragmatics. Precisely, the study applied certain Pragmatic theories such as; Speech Act Theory, face theory, Politeness Theory and Conversational Analysis as basis for analysis. This exercise was done in order to prove or test the theoretical position that in instances of language use in context, euphemisms perform functions as espoused under Speech Act Theory. Data was gathered using a triangulation method of which multiple methods like the semi structured interview was conducted on twenty informants who are native speakers, observations were also carried out in domains such as court, home, school, radio station, church e.t.c. A word sentence compilation task was also administered to school pupils who were given ten ordinary Silozi euphemisms to supply equivalent euphemisms and using these euphemisms to construct meaningful sentences appropriately.

The study reveals that Silozi euphemisms occur in a wide array of relationships and age groups, although it is used more frequently among elders than the young, thus it may be true to state that the forms euphemisms take and euphemistic patterns depends on the social distance between participants, their relative social statuses, age, occupation, gender and even power of the speaker and hearer which determines the strategies applied in the use of Silozi euphemisms. The similarity the work shares with the current one is in the areas of research design. The current study just like this work also employed a triangulation method of which a multiple form of technique was used in gathering data. The researcher made use of a semi structured inter view of

which information from selected informants were recorded and observations of selected locations for the study was made alongside a questionnaire format (compilation task) which was also administered to respondents. The major difference between this study and the current study is predicated on the fact that this study was analysed from both pragmatic and sociolinguistic perspectives unlike the current study which focused only on pragmatic elements as framework for analysis.

Saka (2011) looks into the euphemisms employed by students, during conversations, from a sociolinguistic perspective, using a blend of Sapir and Whorf's hypothesis known as the Sapirwhorfian hypothesis with specific attention to linguistic relativity as a framework for analysis. The study addressed the use of euphemisms among the students of the Department of English and Literary Studies A.B.U, Zaria. The researcher in gathering her data conducted an open-ended questionnaire of which the respondents were asked to complete and produce other euphemisms known to them. This is a similarity the study shares with the current study of which a word and a sentence compilation task is conducted. The study however reveals that in the area covered for the study that students prefer to use the phrase 'making love' than 'sexual intercourse' and also the word 'less privilege' as euphemism in place of 'poor'. More so it reveals that the students prefer to use the expression 'brain disorder' to 'mental illnesses, same with the phrase 'physically disabled' to 'handicapped'. It was also discovered that most students prefer or feel comfortable using words like 'heavy' for pregnant, 'naughty' for stupid and 'anal gas' for fart. The researcher recommended that students should be encouraged in the use of pleasant words in place of the unpleasant. One of the shortcomings of this study is that it fails to state the possible reasons for the use of these euphemisms by the students.

This study of euphemism, though not from a Pragmatic perspective like the current study, has been very useful to the study as it helps create a basis for this work, being the only work available on euphemisms in the Department of English and Literary studies, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria.

Mukaro *et al.* (2013) looks at the infringement of conversational maxim in public conversations in Shona. The study probes how the tenets of conversations as proposed by Grice (1975) are at times not observed without being uninformative or being uncooperative. Certain maxims can be ignored or violated yet speakers remain informative, cooperative and polite. The conversations referred to here are daily chats, talks and discussions in which Shona, speakers find themselves. The view taken in this paper is that when people violate maxims, or a maxim, there is one which they will be observing, hence triggering implicature. The violation itself is a trigger for implicature. A number of ways in which the maxims are violated were found in Shona and categorized as maxim clash, opting out of a maxim and flouting of maxims. Besides these it was also noted that in Shona speakers show that they are cognizant of the maxims by hedging which shows they are about to violate a maxim. The data was obtained under naturalistic conversation settings and is analysed within the features of conversation implicature. This work focused on public conversations in Shona language and the use of idiomatic expressions, while the current study looks into the use of euphemisms in selected utterances in Yoruba Language.

Xiao-yan (2014) in the light of politeness principle analyses the use of euphemisms in a press conference with major focus on diplomatic euphemisms. In carrying out the analysis, the researcher chose one transcript of a press conference with diplomatic euphemism used in question-answer dialogue patterns which is analysed in the light of politeness principle to see the relationship between diplomatic euphemism and politeness principle. The study shows that

diplomatic euphemisms in press conferences basically observes the politeness principle such as the Tact maxim, Approbation maxim, Agreement maxim and Sympathy maxim in order to show politeness to others. It was also observed that in press conferences politeness sometimes is more focused on self because euphemisms are to minimise impolite expressions and to maximise polite expressions of what the speaker says. The similarity this work shares with the current work is based on its pragmatic approach as it also explores aspects of politeness principle which is also a part of the framework the current study adopts for analysis. However, the difference is predicated on the fact that it does not look into other aspects of Pragmatics, such as the Speech Act Theory like the current study.

Xin (2015) with the view that euphemism is restricted not only by rules in linguistics, but also by communicative environment, in his paper deals with the possible violation of the Cooperative Principle in the use of euphemism in order to help achieve a successful cross-cultural communication. The researcher from a pragmatic perspective looked into Cooperative Principle in English euphemisms. He based his analysis on the four categories of maxims of the Cooperative Principle propounded by Grice (1975) by checking the possible violations of the quantity, quality, manner and relation maxim in the use euphemisms in English language. The research further reveals that most of these maxims are flouted in the use of euphemism but are done mostly for special purposes, in that if we correctly understand the reason why we violate these maxims in the use of euphemism, it can help us use the language more effectively.

#### **2.4. Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework adopted in this study is the Speech Act Theory proposed by Austin (1962) and Politeness Principle put forward by Brown and Levinson (1978&1987) which is seen as a necessary complement for Grice's (1969) Cooperative Principle. 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. Leech (1983) explains that politeness concerns the relationship between two participants whom we may call *self* and *other* which will normally in conversation be identified as *S* and *H* respectively. Furthermore, in making a conversation, the speaker shows politeness both to the hearer and to the third person who may or may not be present in the speech situation; this means that 'other' applies not only to the addressees but to the third person(s). Leech outlines the maxims of the PP as;

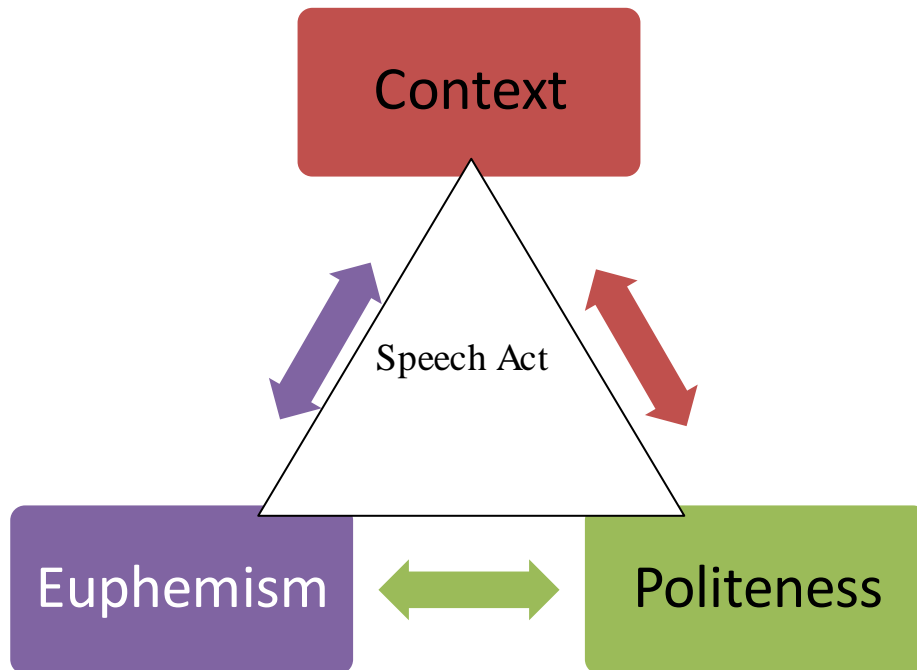
- A. Tact maxim: (commissives and directives/ impositives)
  - i. minimises cost to others
  - ii. maximises benefit to others.
- B. Generosity maxim: (commissives and directives/impositives)
  - i. minimises benefit to the speaker
  - ii. maximises cost to self.
- C. Approbation maxim: (assertives/representatives and expressive)
  - i. minimises dispraise of others
  - ii. maximises praise of others.
- D. Modesty maxim: (assertives/representatives and expressives)
  - i. minimises praise of self
  - ii. maximises dispraise of self.
- E. Agreement maxim: (assertives)
  - i. maximises agreement between self and other people and
  - ii. minimises disagreement between self and others.
- F. Sympathy maxim: (assertives/representatives)

- i. minimises antipathy between self and other
- ii. maximises sympathy between self and others.

Leech explains that within each maxim, sub-maxims (b) seems less important than sub- maxim (a) and this illustrates the general law that negative politeness (avoidance of discord) is a more weighty consideration than positive politeness (seeking concord). Therefore, the PP maxims then may be formulated generally from two angles; to minimise (other things being equal) the expression of impolite beliefs and to maximise (other things being equal) the expression of polite beliefs (Leech 1983). The relevance of this theory to the present study lies in the fact that verbal politeness, as a conversational strategy in cooperative communicative interchanges, constitutes a basic principle to analyse language as a social phenomenon.

The study within the light of the aforementioned also adopts as part of the framework for analysis the different Speech Acts proposed by Austin and Searle which are; directives, commissives, expressives, verdictives, declarations and behabitives alongside the contexts required for language users to interpret or decode the euphemisms. Thus it provides the research an avenue to present or explain in clear terms the situations in which the euphemisms are used and the background knowledge which helps in understanding the meaning of the euphemisms as used in conversations

Below is a diagrammatic representation of the theoretical framework for analysis as proposed by the researcher:



**Fig. 1**

In the diagram above, euphemism which is the major concept in this study is presented to relate first to the contextual features necessary for the understanding of the use of euphemisms. Secondly, to pragmatic theories such as; Speech Act Theory, which shows how euphemisms within the confines of the context of use are used in performing different, acts in language, both directly and indirectly. And thirdly to the politeness strategies often employed in order to be polite during conversations, so as to achieve successful communication. These all contribute to the interpretation and understanding of the speaker's intention when euphemism is employed.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Preamble**

This chapter explains the methodological procedures and techniques the study adopts in an attempt to provide plausible answers to the research questions raised in chapter one. It presents the details relating to the research design employed in the study, specifically the sources of data, data collection technique, analytical procedure and test application of analytical model.

#### **3.1 Sources of Data**

The primary sources of data for this research include a word and sentence compilation task in a questionnaire format administered to (50) native Yoruba speakers; recorded semi-structured interviews with four (4) adult respondents and five (5) downloaded episodes of the Yoruba programme, '*minijojo*' on African Independent Television (AIT), from which utterances with euphemisms during conversations were randomly selected.

#### **3.2 Data Collection Method**

The data for this study were directly collected from responses given by fifty (50) respondents from different age groups in the rural setting, who were administered the word and sentence compilation task in a questionnaire format. The researcher provided some familiar Yoruba words or expressions and required the respondents to produce euphemisms for such words or expressions. Data was also gathered from selected five (5) mundane conversations in the Yoruba (AIT) programme, titled, '*minijojo*', which were downloaded on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com). In addition, a recorded semi-structured interview was also carried out with four (4) informants who were adults and are believed to possess a great mastery of the language.

The total number of thirty seven (37) euphemisms collected from the questionnaire, were used for the word and sentence compilation analysis. The researcher also collected fifty (50) euphemisms from the interviews and conversations in T.V programme, which were used for the analysis of the Politeness maxims and Speech acts within the Yoruba context.

### **3.3 Transcription and Translation of Data**

The researcher in this study transcribed and translated the data collected from interviews and conversations in the T.V programme. In addition, the researcher went further to translate the respondents responses to the word and sentence compilation task administered to them, although the target language might not have equivalent words to represent the original, but it still aids understanding.

### **3.4 Method of Data Analysis**

The analytical model which was used for the analysis of the euphemisms collected is in line with the theoretical framework the study adopted, which centres on the Politeness principle propounded by Brown and Levinson (1978&1987) and the Speech Act Theory propounded by Austin (1962). A tabular format is used in the presentation of data as the tables are divided into four columns. The first column with the title; utterances and gloss, contains the utterance within which the euphemism is used and its gloss; the second presents the appropriate context of situation in which the euphemism is used by the speaker; the third includes the speech acts performed by the euphemisms directly or indirectly, while the fourth column consists the politeness maxims adhered to by the speakers in the use of these euphemisms. The column is presented with the initials of the various PP maxims which include; T- as the tact maxim, G- as generosity, AP- as approbation, M- as modesty, AG- as agreement and S- as Sympathy maxim.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION OF DATA, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

#### 4.0 Preamble

This chapter presents and analyses the data collected, which comprises of some euphemisms identified to be in use in Yoruba Language, from the Yoruba speaking environment the study covers for analysis.

#### 4.1 Presentation of Data

In the presentation of the data, the euphemisms collected from the word and sentence compilation task administered to fifty Yoruba speakers from ages 30-35, 35- 50 and 50&above were tabulated for clarification and easy interpretation. Also a tabular format was used in the presentation of data as the tables were divided into four columns. The first column with the title; utterances and gloss, contains the utterance within which the euphemism is used and its gloss; the second presents the appropriate context of situation in which the euphemism is used by the speaker; the third includes the speech acts performed by the euphemisms directly or indirectly, while the fourth column consists the politeness maxims adhered to by the speakers in the use of these euphemisms. The column is presented with the initials of the various PP maxims which include; T- as the tact maxim, G- as generosity, AP- as approbation, M- as modesty, AG- as agreement and S- as Sympathy maxim.

## **4.2 Analysis of Data**

The analysis is in two levels; the first is the quantitative and descriptive analysis of the euphemisms gathered from the word and sentence compilation task administered to some respondents, while the second is a pragmatic analysis of the euphemisms found in utterances during conversations from interviews and from the Yoruba T.V. programme titled *Minijojo*. This second level is carried out in the light of theoretical framework the study adopts for analysis; Speech Act Theory propounded by Austin (1962), and Politeness Theory as put forward by Brown and Levinson (1987).

### **4.2.1 Analysis of Euphemisms from the Word and Sentence Compilation Task**

This is an analysis of the word and sentence compilation task administered in a questionnaire format by the researcher to fifty respondents who are expected to produce euphemistic equivalence to ten words.

**Table 1: Analysis of Respondents Responses to the Word and Sentence Compilation Task**

Words		Were	Okobo	Loyun	Ya igbe	Nnkan osu	Obo	Asewo	Iyo	Oko	Ole
S/N	Age										
1	20-35	<i>Alarun opolo</i>	februari			Alejo	Nnkan-omo-obinrin	Oni –ise ale	isebe	Nnkan-omo-okunrin	Gbewiri
2	20- 35	<i>Asinwin</i>					Nnkan-omo-obinrin			Nnkan-omo-okunrin	
3	20-35					Alejo	Idi			Idi	
4	20-35	<i>Asinwin</i>	<i>Febuari/ Eshin –inu iwe</i>	lya- ibeji		Alejo	Nnkan-omo-obinrin	Oni-ise-ku ise		Nnkan omo okunrin	
5	20-35			Feraku		Alejo			Isebe		
6	20-35	<i>Alarun opolo</i>				Se epo		Ani-mashaun		Nnkan omo okunrin	
7	20-35					Se epo			Isebe		Gbewiri
8	20-35	<i>Alarun opolo</i>					Nnkan omo-obinrin		Isebe		
9	20-35			Gbe aayan mi		Alejo	Nnkan omo obinrin	Oni –ise – ale		Nnkan omo okunrin	
10	20-35			Gbe aayan mi	Se igbonse			Ani-mashaun			Jaguda
11	20-35			Gbe aayan mi	Se igbonse						Jaguda
12	20-35	<i>Aarun opolo</i>			<i>Igbonse</i>			<i>Animashau n</i>	<i>Adun obe</i>	<i>Nnkan omo okunrin</i>	Olosha
13	20-35	<i>Aarun opolo</i>		<i>Gbe aayan</i>							Olosha

				<i>mi</i>							
14	20-35	<i>Ayiri</i>					<i>Nnkan omo obinrin</i>	<i>Oni- ise-ku ise</i>		<i>Nnkan omo okunrin</i>	
15	20-35	<i>Alarun opolo</i>	<i>Eshin inu iwe</i>	<i>Iya ibeji</i>	<i>Se igbonse</i>		<i>Nnkan omo obinrin</i>		<i>Isebe</i>	<i>Nnkan omo okunrin</i>	<i>Afewo</i>
16	20-35			<i>Iya ibeji</i>			<i>Nnkan omo obinrin</i>	<i>Gbele pawo</i>	<i>Isebe</i>	<i>Nnkan omo okunrin</i>	<i>Alafowora</i>
17	20-35	<i>Asinwin</i>			<i>Se gaa</i>		<i>Nnkan omo obinrin</i>	<i>gbele pawo</i>	<i>Adun obe</i>	<i>Nnkan omo okunrin</i>	<i>Gbewiri</i>
18	35-50	<i>Asinwin</i>		<i>Feraku</i>	<i>Se igbonse</i>		<i>Nnkan omo obinrin</i>	<i>Oni –ise-ku-ise</i>	<i>Isebe</i>	<i>Nnkan omo okunrin</i>	<i>Olosha</i>
19	35-50	<i>Asinwin</i>	<i>febrari</i>	<i>Feraku</i>	<i>Se igbonse</i>	<i>Alejo</i>	<i>Nnkan omo obinrin</i>	<i>Gbele – pawo</i>	<i>Isebe</i>	<i>Nnkan omo okunrin</i>	<i>Afewo</i>
20	35-50	<i>Alarun opolo</i>	<i>Eniti- atan re ko gbepon</i>	<i>Feraku</i>	<i>Se igbonse</i>	<i>Se epo</i>	<i>Oju ara</i>	<i>Gbele – pawo</i>	<i>Osa</i>	<i>Nnkan omo okunrin</i>	<i>Afewo</i>
21	35-50		<i>Alaileshe</i>	<i>Gbe aayan mi</i>	<i>Se igbonse</i>	<i>Alejo</i>	<i>Nnkan omo- obinrin</i>	<i>Gbele – pawo</i>	<i>isebe</i>	<i>Nnkan omo okunrin</i>	<i>Alafowora</i>
22	35-50	<i>Asinwin</i>	<i>Eshi- inu- iwe</i>	<i>Alabara meji</i>	<i>Se igbonse</i>	<i>Nnkan Alejo</i>		<i>Oni –ise-ku-ise</i>			<i>Olosha</i>
23	35- 50	<i>Aruun opolo</i>	<i>Febrari</i>	<i>Feraku</i>	<i>Se igbonse</i>	<i>Alejo</i>	<i>Nnkan omo- obinrin</i>		<i>isebe</i>	<i>Nnkan omo okunrin</i>	<i>Alo-koloun- kigbe</i>
24	35-50	<i>Alarun opolo</i>	<i>Febrari/Esh in- inu -iwe</i>	<i>Feraku</i>	<i>Se igbonse</i>	<i>Alejo</i>	<i>Nnkan omo- obinrin</i>		<i>isebe</i>	<i>Nnkan omo okunrin</i>	
25	35-50	<i>Alarun</i>	<i>Febrari</i>		<i>Se igbonse</i>	<i>Se epo</i>	<i>Nnkan</i>	<i>Oni –ise-</i>	<i>isebe</i>		<i>Afewo</i>

		<i>opolo</i>					<i>omo-obinrin</i>	<i>ku-ise</i>			
26	35-50	<i>Asinwin</i>	<i>Eshin –inu-iwe</i>		<i>Igbonse</i>	<i>Se epo</i>			<i>osa</i>		<i>Afewo</i>
27	35-50	<i>Asinwin</i>	<i>Eshin inu iwe</i>		<i>Se igbonse</i>	<i>alejo</i>	<i>ele</i>	<i>Oni –ise-ku-ise</i>	<i>isebe</i>	<i>Nnkan omo okunrin</i>	<i>Alokobunki gbe</i>
28	35-50	<i>Asinwin</i>	<i>Eshin inu iwe</i>	<i>Feraku</i>	<i>Se gaa</i>	<i>alejo</i>	<i>Nnkan omo obinrin</i>	<i>Gbele pawo</i>	<i>isebe</i>	<i>Nnkan omo okunrin</i>	<i>Alafowora</i>
29	35-50	<i>Alarun opolo</i>	<i>Feraku</i>		<i>Da owo ti ile</i>	<i>Se epo</i>	<i>Nnkan omo obinrin</i>	<i>Alagbere</i>	<i>isebe</i>	<i>Nnkan omo okunrin</i>	<i>Afewo</i>
30	35-50	<i>Asinwin</i>	<i>Akura</i>	<i>Feraku</i>	<i>Se gaa</i>		<i>Nnkan omo obinrin</i>	<i>Gbele pawo</i>	<i>isebe</i>	<i>Nnkan omo okunrin</i>	<i>Alafowora</i>
31	35 -50	<i>Alarun opolo</i>	<i>Eshin –inu –iwe</i>	<i>alabaramoji</i>	<i>Da owo ti ile</i>		<i>Oju ara obinrin</i>	<i>Gbele pawo</i>	<i>isebe</i>	<i>Eketa itan</i>	<i>Alokolounki gbe</i>
32	35 -50	<i>Aaarun opolo</i>	<i>Februari</i>	<i>alabaramoji</i>	<i>Se igbonse</i>	<i>alejo</i>	<i>Nnkan omo obinrin</i>	<i>Gbele pawo</i>	<i>isebe</i>	<i>Nnkan omo okunrin</i>	<i>Jaguda</i>
33	35 -50	<i>Asinwin</i>	<i>Eniti atan re ko gbe pon</i>	<i>Feraku</i>	<i>Se igbonse</i>	<i>alejo</i>	<i>Nnkan omo obinrin</i>	<i>Alagbere</i>	<i>isebe</i>	<i>Nnkan omo okunrin</i>	<i>Alokolounki gbe</i>
34	50 –above	<i>Alaganna, Alarun opolo</i>	<i>Eshin inu iwe</i>	<i>Feraku</i>	<i>Se igbonse</i>	<i>alejo</i>	<i>Nnkan omo obinrin</i>	<i>Oni inabi</i>	<i>isebe</i>	<i>Nnkan omo okunrin</i>	<i>Alokolounki gbe</i>
35	50 –above	<i>Alaganna</i>	<i>Akura</i>	<i>Alabaramoji</i>	<i>Da owo tile</i>	<i>alejo</i>	<i>Nnkan omo obinrin</i>	<i>Oni inabi</i>	<i>isebe</i>	<i>Nnkan omo okunrin</i>	<i>Alokolounki gbe</i>
36	50 –above	<i>Alaganna</i>	<i>Akura</i>	<i>Alabaramoji</i>	<i>Se gaa</i>	<i>Nnkan alejo</i>	<i>Ele</i>	<i>Oni inabi</i>	<i>Osa</i>	<i>Eketa itan</i>	<i>Ojawe ile onile bo tire mole</i>
37	50 –above	<i>Oni-gan-gan-gan</i>	<i>Akura</i>	<i>Alabaramoji</i>	<i>Se gaa</i>	<i>alejo</i>	<i>Oju-ara-</i>	<i>Gbele pawo</i>	<i>Osa/is ebe</i>	<i>Nnkan omo okunrin</i>	<i>Alafowoora</i>

							<i>obinrin</i>				
38	50 –above	<i>Alaganna</i>	<i>Akura/ Eshin inu iwe</i>	<i>Feraku</i>	<i>Da owo tile</i>	<i>alejo</i>	<i>Ohun abo</i>	<i>Oni-ise-ku-ise/oni inabi</i>	<i>isebe</i>	<i>Nnkan omo okunrin</i>	
39	50 –above	<i>Asinwin</i>	<i>Akura</i>	<i>Alabaramoji</i>	<i>Se gaa</i>	<i>alejo</i>	<i>Ohun abo</i>	<i>oni- inabi</i>	<i>isebe</i>	<i>Nnkan omo okunrin</i>	<i>Alo-koloun-kigbe</i>
40	50 –above	<i>Alaganna</i>	<i>Eshin inu iwe</i>	<i>Feraku</i>	<i>Se igbonse</i>	<i>alejo</i>	<i>Oju-awe</i>	<i>Oni-ise-ku-ise/oni inabi</i>	<i>Osa/is ebe</i>	<i>Nnkan omo okunrin</i>	<i>Alafowora</i>
41	50 –above	<i>Alarun opolo</i>	<i>Eshin inu iwe</i>	<i>Alabaramoji</i>	<i>Da owo tile</i>	<i>alejo</i>	<i>Nnkan omo obinrin</i>	<i>Oni-ise-ku-ise</i>	<i>osa</i>	<i>Nnkan omo okunrin</i>	<i>Alafowora</i>
42	50– above	<i>Asinwin</i>	<i>Eshin inu iwe</i>	<i>Feraku</i>	<i>Se igbonse</i>	<i>alejo</i>	<i>Ele</i>	<i>Oni- inabi</i>	<i>isebe</i>	<i>Nnkan omo okunrin</i>	<i>Ojawe ile onile bo tire mole</i>
43	50 –above	<i>Alaganna</i>	<i>Awe</i>	<i>Feraku</i>	<i>Se gaa/igbonse</i>	<i>Nkan Alejo</i>	<i>Oju Ara</i>	<i>Gbele pawo</i>	<i>Osa/ls ebe</i>	<i>Eketa itan</i>	<i>Gbewiri</i>
44	50 –above	<i>Asinwin</i>	<i>Eshin-inu-iwe</i>	<i>Alabaramoji</i>	<i>Se gaa/da owo tile</i>	<i>alejo</i>	<i>Ohun abo</i>	<i>Oni-inabi</i>	<i>isebe</i>	<i>Nnkan omo okunrin</i>	<i>Olosha</i>
45	50 –above	<i>Alaganna</i>	<i>akura</i>	<i>Alabaramoji</i>	<i>Da owo tile</i>	<i>alejo</i>	<i>Oju awe obinrin</i>	<i>Oni inabi</i>	<i>isebe</i>	<i>Nnkan omo okunrin</i>	<i>Alokolounki gbe</i>
46	50 – above	<i>Alarun opolo</i>	<i>Eshin –inu - iwe</i>	<i>Feraku</i>	<i>Ja ewe-nje je omii</i>	<i>alejo</i>	<i>Oju ara obinrin</i>	<i>Oni inabi</i>	<i>isebe</i>	<i>Nnkan omo okunrin</i>	<i>Ojawe ile onile bo tire mole</i>
47	50 – above	<i>Alaganna</i>	<i>akura</i>	<i>Alabaramoji</i>	<i>Ja ewe-nje-je omii</i>	<i>alejo</i>	<i>Ele</i>	<i>Oni inabi</i>	<i>Osa</i>	<i>Nnkan omo okunrin</i>	<i>Alafowora</i>
48	50 – above	<i>Asinwi</i>	<i>Akura</i>	<i>Alabaramoji</i>	<i>Se igbonse</i>	<i>alejo</i>	<i>Nnkan omo obinrin</i>	<i>Oni inabi</i>	<i>isebe</i>	<i>Nnkan omo okunrin</i>	<i>Firdi okere</i>
49	50 –above	<i>Oni-gan-gan-gan</i>	<i>Akura/eshin –inu-iwe</i>	<i>Alabaramoji</i>	<i>Da owo tile</i>	<i>alejo</i>	<i>Ele</i>	<i>Oni-inabi</i>	<i>osa</i>	<i>Nnkan omo okunrin</i>	<i>Olosha</i>



50	50 –above	<i>Alaganna</i>	<i>Akura</i>	<i>Alabaramoji</i>	<i>Ja ewe- nje –je omii</i>	<i>Alejo</i>	<i>Ele</i>	<i>Oni-inabi</i>	<i>isebe</i>	<i>Nnkan omo okunrin</i>	<i>Alo-koloun- kigbe</i>
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## Discussion

### *Were* (Madness)

In table 1 above, the euphemisms provided by respondents between age brackets 20-35 shows that euphemistic substitutes for the word *were* (madness), include: *alarun opolo* (one with brain disease) and *Asinwin* (crazy). About six of the seventeen respondents wrote down *alarun opolo*, with three others who wrote down *asinwin* as euphemistic equivalents for the word madness, while others failed to give answers to the word which may be because they had no idea. Also, it was discovered that one of the respondents gave a word which might not be accepted fully as a euphemism, *ayiri* (one who is not in the right senses or whose head is turned upside down) may be because it describes directly the term madness and could serve as a synonym.

However, respondents between ages 35-50 as shown in the table, also settled for the euphemistic expressions, *alarun opolo* and *asinwi* just like the first age group. About eight respondents wrote down *Asinwin* and seven wrote *alarun opolo* as substitutes for the word madness. It is noticed that most respondents in this age group gave answers to the word except for one of the respondents who didn't give an answer unlike the first age group, probably because they have more idea about the use of euphemisms because they are older.

Moreover, as shown in the table, the answers produced by the respondents between ages 50 and above, present a different euphemism for the word 'madness', *alaganna* which describes one who acts anyhow. About eleven respondents wrote down *alaganna* while three and four of the respondents wrote down *alaarun opolo* and *asinwin* respectively as euphemistic substitute for the word madness. However, there were instances where respondents from this age group wrote more than one euphemism to show their high level of understanding of the use of euphemisms.

This type of euphemism falls under the common euphemism used in the society and it is a negative type of euphemism in that it is used to avoid that which could be offensive.

### ***Okobo (Impotence)***

Responses from respondents between ages 20- 35 shows that few of the respondents in this group have an idea of the euphemisms for the word *okobo* (impotence), as only three of the respondents in this age group gave their answers. Two wrote down *febrari* which refers to the month of February based on the belief that one born in February which is an incomplete month is usually weak; thus an impotent man is often referred to as *febrari*. Although the word might not really suffice as it could be classified under slangs, but can still be used as a euphemism. The other euphemistic substitute produced by the other respondent is *eshin –inu-iwe* which means a horse in a book as the impotent man is likened to a horse in a book which cannot walk or run. Respondents between the ages of 35-50 gave quite a number of euphemisms such as *febrari* which was written by five of the respondents, *Eshin- inu- iwe*, written by six of the respondents and *eniti –atan- re- ko-gbe-pon* written by two of the respondents which means one whose sperm is weak probably because they are older than the former age group. However it is observed that some of the respondents even ended up producing the meaning of the word as euphemistic substitute; for instance, the words *alaleshe* and *koleshe* produced by respondents 18 and 21. This only explains the meaning of the word impotent as referring to one who cannot do or perform, thus they cannot be accepted as euphemisms.

Moreover, older respondents between ages 50 and above gave a variety of euphemistic substitutes for impotence such as; *Akura* (one whose body is dead), *awe* (a mister) and *eshin inu iwe*. In the analysis it is discovered that about eleven respondents wrote down *akura* as

euphemistic substitute for impotence, while one of the respondents wrote *awe* with seven respondents who gave *eshin-inu-iwe* as substitutes. However there are instances where some respondents wrote more than one euphemisms based on their understanding of the use of the euphemisms in the language. This type of euphemism falls under the social euphemism used in the society and it is a negative type of euphemism in that it is used to avoid that which could be offensive or embarrassing.

### ***Loyun (To Be Pregnant)***

In the Yoruba society, the period of pregnancy is seen as a very delicate one, such that the woman is treated with extra care and is bound with certain rules as to what to eat and wear, how to sleep, where to go and when to go out. However, because of the fear of the unknown, the term pregnancy is not used directly as it attracts so many euphemistic expressions. Thus, the respondents in the table, who belong to the first age group (20-35) produced euphemistic equivalents such as; *iya-ibeji* (mother of two babies), *feraku* (have blown the body to remain) and *gbe ayan mi* (to swallow croackroach) for the word *loyun* (to become pregnant). About three of the respondents wrote down *iya ibeji*, with four who wrote down *gbe ayan mi* and just one who wrote *feraku*. From the analysis, it is noticed that the respondents from these age group who gave answers to this word were few, possibly because they do not have an idea about the euphemisms for being pregnant in the language. However euphemism like *gbe ayan mi* seems more like a slang but could be use as a euphemism for mocking.

Also, euphemisms produced by respondents between ages 35-50 in the table are; *feraku*, *iya ibeji* and *alabameji* which means one who has two bodies. Eight of the respondents wrote down *feraku*, while one wrote *gbe ayan mi*, just like those in the 20-35 age group and three of

the respondents wrote *alabaramoji*. Here, it is noticed that respondents of this age group seems to possess more idea than the first group as more respondents produced answers to the word.

The third group which are those between ages 50 above used euphemisms such as; *feraku* and *alabaramoji* of which six of the respondents wrote down *feraku* and eleven wrote *alabaramoji* as euphemistic variants for being pregnant. It is noticed that the respondents in this age bracket all gave answers to this word which shows that they have the idea of the euphemisms used for the expression 'being pregnant', probably because they belong to a higher age group which could also buttress the fact that none wrote *gbe ayan mi* as the other younger age group which could be mocking or sarcastic. This type of euphemism is often used as a means to avoid or eradicate that which people prefer not to deal with directly, thus it can be seen as a negative euphemism.

#### ***Ya Igbe (To Defecate)***

As presented in the table above, the first age group of respondents between (20- 35) wrote down the following euphemistic substitutes; *se igbonse* (shaking of legs), or *se gaa* (to bend) for the expression, *ya igbe* 'to defecate' of which four respondents wrote the former and one the latter. It can be deduced from the analysis that few of the respondents know the euphemisms for the expression within this age group, this might be because they have no idea of the use of the euphemistic equivalence. The second age group of respondents (35-50) wrote down three variants of euphemisms for defecating as opposed to the first group who gave just two. These are; *se igbonse*, *se gaa* and *da owo ti ile* (to place hands on the ground). In this group, twelve of the respondents wrote down *se igbonse* while two wrote down *se gaa*, and two others, *da owo ti ile*.

The respondents in this group seem to have more knowledge of the euphemisms for this word than the first group; reasons can be attributed to the fact that they are older. In the third age group (50 and above), about four respondents produced *se- igbonse* as euphemisms for defecation, while five others gave *se-gaa* with five others who wrote down *da-owo- ti ile* and three who wrote *Ja ewe-je-nje –omii* (cut the leaves that makes me eat another). However there are also instances where some respondents produced two euphemistic variants as a result of their verse knowledge of the euphemisms. For example *se gaa* and *da- owo-ti-ile* as presented in the analysis. This type of euphemism is often used as a means to avoid or eradicate that which people prefer not to deal with directly, thus it can be seen as a negative euphemism.

#### ***Nkan Osu (Menstruation)***

The table also presents euphemistic variants for the expression *nkan osu* (menstruation) produced by five respondents from ages 20 to 35 who wrote down *alejo* (visitor), with two others who wrote *se epo*, (to produce oil) which seems more like a slang, but could also be accepted as a euphemistic substitute. This euphemism, *se epo* was also written by five of the respondents from the second age group 35-50, while about nine of the respondents in this same group wrote down *alejo*. However, it is obvious that *se epo* could possibly be a slang popularly used as a euphemism for menstruation among the younger age group especially within the 20-35 and a few of the 35-50 age group as none of those within the 50 and above age group wrote down the expression, rather the seventeen respondents all wrote down *alejo* as a result of their higher knowledge about the use of the euphemism. This type of euphemism is often used as a means to avoid or eradicate that which people prefer not to deal with directly, thus it can be seen as a negative euphemism.

### ***Obo (vagina)***

As presented in the table, most respondents possess the general knowledge that the word ‘vaginal’ *obo* is usually referred to euphemistically as the ‘Female thing’ *nkan omo obinrin*. Thus, most respondents from the younger age group wrote down ‘female thing’ as the euphemism except for few who do not have an idea of the euphemisms used as substitute for the word who wrote down *idi* (buttocks) which expresses a different idea. About eight respondents from the 20-35 age group wrote *nkan omo- obinrin*, with five respondents from the 30- 50 age group. Respondents from the 35-50 age group unlike the 20-35 age group had one respondent each, who gave other euphemistic variants such as *ele* (damsel) and *oju ara obinrin* (a woman’s body opening) respectively. Moreover in the third age group more variants were given by the respondents possibly because of the great mastery of the use of the language they possess. Euphemistic variants such as *ele* was written by four of the respondents; *nkan omo- obinrin*, *ohun abo* and *oju ara* were written by three respondents respectively , and *oju awe obinrin* by two respondents. This type of euphemism is also used as a means to avoid or eradicate that which people prefer not to deal with directly, thus it can be seen as a negative euphemism.

### ***Asewo (Prostitute)***

For the word *Asewo* (prostitute), the euphemisms written by the respondents are; *oni- ise- ale* (night worker), *gbele pawo* (one who makes money by staying at home), *oni- inabi* (promiscuous person), *oni- ise- ku- ise* (one who does inappropriate things) and *animashaun* (a charitable person). Three of the respondents between ages 20-35 wrote down *animashaun* which seems more like a slang, while two wrote down *oni-ise-ku-ise*, *gbele pawo* and *oni- ise- ale* respectively making it sound more like a job. In the second age group (35-50), four

respondents gave *oni-ise- ku-ise* as the euphemisms for a prostitute, seven also wrote *gbele-pawo* while two others wrote *alagbere* (one who does immoderate things or who does acts of supererogation) which might not really be accepted as a euphemism as it seems too direct. The third group (50 and above) differently from the other two introduced a different variant as twelve of the respondents wrote down *oni- inabi* as another euphemism for a prostitute, while two wrote down *gbele -pa -owo* with one of the respondents who wrote *oni-ise-ku-ise*. Moreover, there were instances where two respondents wrote down two variants of the euphemisms as it could be attributed to their knowledge of the use of the euphemisms in the language. This type of euphemism falls under the social euphemism used in the society and it is a negative type of euphemism in that it is used to avoid that which could be offensive or embarrassing.

### ***Iyo* (Salt)**

For the word *Iyo* (salt), only few of the respondents had no idea of the euphemisms for this word especially from the younger age group. The respondents between ages 20 -35 had about 6 respondents who wrote down *isebe* (ingredient for stew), with 2 who wrote *adun obe* (sweetness of the soup) while twelve of the respondent between ages 35 -50 wrote *isebe* with two others who wrote *osa* which means the Lagoon. This is as a result of the fact that people try to avoid the taboo to say that there isn't salt which means *iyó* 'joy' in the home, thus, it is preferable to say *isebe* or *osa*. It is mostly found among adults to say *isebe* or *osa*, this is confirmed by the respondents who belong to the older age group (50 and above) as ten of the respondents wrote down *isebe* with four who wrote *osa*. Some also gave two variants of the euphemism.



### ***Oko (Penis)***

The table also presents euphemistic variants for the word *Oko* (penis) of which most respondents have the general knowledge that it is often referred to as the ‘male thing’ *nkan omo okunrin*. Thus, most of the respondents from the younger age group wrote down the male thing except for few who do not have an idea of the euphemisms used as substitute for the word who wrote down *idi* (buttocks) which expresses a different idea. About ten respondents from the 20-35 age group wrote *nkan omo- okunrin*, with twelve respondents from the 30- 50age group. Respondents from the 30-50 age group unlike the 20-35 age group had one respondents who gave other euphemistic variant, *eketa itan* which means the third thigh. Moreover, in the third age group 15 of the respondents just like others wrote *nkan omo- okunrin*, while two respondents wrote *eketa itan*. This type of euphemisms falls under the common euphemisms which are often used as a means to avoid or eradicate that which people prefer not to deal with directly, thus it can be seen as a negative euphemism.

### ***Ole (Thief)***

So many euphemisms were produced by the respondents as regards the word *Ole* (Thief) of which some were mild expressions to reduce the meaning, while some were on the harsh side. Examples of these are; *afewo* (pilfer), *alafowora* (light fingered person) *alokolounkigbe* (one whose departure makes the owner of the goods cry), *gbewiri* (one who steals without being caught), *ojawe ile onile bo tire mole* (one who cuts leaves from another man’s house but covers his own). Three of the respondents from the first age group (20-35) wrote down *gbewiri*, two wrote *olasha* and *jaguda* respectively while one of the respondents wrote *afewo* and *alafowora* respectively. The first set of euphemistic expressions given by the first and second set of

respondents seem a bit harsh and could also be used as synonyms to the actual word thief unlike the last sets which seems mild and can be employed in situations when one chooses to be polite.

Moreover, in the second age group, three of the respondents wrote down euphemistic substitutes such as *alafowoora* and *afewo* respectively, while four wrote *alonkilounkigbe* and two wrote *olosh*a with one *respondent* who wrote *jaguda*. The third group of respondents introduced other euphemistic variants such as *ojawe- ile –onile-bo tire mole* and *alafowora* which was written by four of the respondents respectively with five who wrote down *alo-koloun- kigbe*, while two others wrote *olosh*a with one each who wrote *jaguda* and *firindi –okere* respectively. These types of euphemisms falls under the social euphemisms, they can be classified under the negative euphemisms as they are defensive in nature and are employed to avoid impoliteness.

#### **4.2.2 Pragmatic Analysis of Euphemisms in Utterances from Mundane Conversations in Interviews and *Minijojo***

About fifty euphemisms gathered from interview sessions and from the utterances of Yoruba speakers in the domain of mundane conversations in the Yoruba programme, ‘*Minijojo*’ on AIT, were analysed and presented in a tabular format for clarity. Each table is divided into four columns; the first column presents the utterances within which the euphemisms are used. The second column includes the context in which the euphemisms are used; the third column gives the Speech acts performed in the use of the euphemisms either directly or indirectly in the utterances used for analysis; while the forth column looks into aspects of politeness maxims adhered to in the use of these euphemisms.

**Table 2: Analysis of Utterances from Selected Interviews and Mundane Conversations**

Utterances / Gloss	Context of use	Speech Act Type/ Illocutionary Act	Politeness Maxims					
			T	G	AP	M	AG	S
<p>1. <i>Akii gbogbo ebi Ogunseye la Abeokuta, nipe won ku ara-feraku iyawa ti won jade laye, ti won si owo ise</i>                      Gloss: we greet the whole family of Ogunseye in Abeokuta that they accept our condolence on our mother who has <b>left the world, and has put a halt to her work</b></p>	<p>The anchor of the programme is sending condolences to a family who is bereaved; whose mother is dead.</p>	<p>a. Direct illocutionary act: assertive (reporting)                      b. Indirect illocutionary act: behabitive (sympathizing)</p>		✓				
<p>2. <i>Kòpé to ló tan ti àkàrà fi tú sépo</i>                      Gloss: Not so long after you had left that <b>the bean cake busted into the palm oil.</b></p>	<p>The speaker shares her experience with her friend who joined her in lying against another friend of which the truth was later revealed.</p>	<p>a. Direct Illocutionary act: assertive (informing)                      b. Indirect Illocutionary act: expressive (regretting)</p>	✓					
<p>3. <i>Ọmọdẹ o seé gbé lọ ibi ti Olóde ba ti ja</i>                      Gloss: children cannot be taken to an environment infected with <b>small pox (one who owns the town).</b></p>	<p>The speaker as a result of his child's experience with small pox states that it isn't right to expose a child to an environment infected with it.</p>	<p>a. Direct illocutionary act: assertive (stating)                      b. Indirect illocutionary act: directive (advising, warning)</p>	✓					

<p>4. <b>Aarun ko gbo oogun</b> kii se arun ti eniyan le ko nipa, bi ba owo tabi wi wo aso kan naa Gloss: (HIV/AIDS) <b>The disease that has no cure</b> is not a type of disease one can easily contract through shaking of hands or sharing of clothes.</p>	<p>The speaker sensitizing the people on ways one should not contract HIV/AIDS.</p>	<p>a. Direct illocutionary act: assertive (informing) b. Indirect illocutionary act: directive (advising)</p>	<p>✓</p>						
<p>5. Segun ti di <b>olòògbé</b> Gloss: Segun has become a <b>dozer</b>.</p>	<p>The speaker is telling another friend who has been away from home about segun's death.</p>	<p>a. Direct illocutionary act: assertive (informing) b. Indirect illocutionary act: expressive (sympathizing)</p>	<p>✓</p>						
<p>6. <b>Olorun ni fi fun ni to si gba pada</b> Gloss: <b>It is God who gives and takes</b></p>	<p>The speaker at the house of a family, who has lost their daughter, tries to console them.</p>	<p>a. Direct Illocutionary act: expressive (acknowledgement) b. Indirect Illocutionary act: verdictive (consoling)</p>						<p>✓</p>	
<p>7. Enikan loun lo sori oke, wo wani kan da owo, owa ranti nkan ti moso, lo ba ya mu owo moto e si abe <b>kinni</b> e, ko da gbogbo e tan Gloss: someone said he went to the mountain</p>	<p>The speaker narrating to the audience on the program about someone's experience on the mountain, where he was told to drop all that he had on him as offering, but he held back</p>	<p>a. Direct Illocutionary act: assertive (informing) b. Indirect Illocutionary act: expressive (mocking)</p>	<p>✓</p>						

where they were told to drop all the money they had on them, and then he remembered what I used to say and kept some part of the money under his something, he didn't drop all.	some and kept it in his private part.							
8. <b>Oba ni onje</b> Gloss: <b>Food is king</b>	A friend came in to visit his friend who was eating at that moment so he was told that <b>Food is king</b> so as not to distract his friend who is eatng.	a. Direct Illocutionary act: assertive (informing) b. Indirect Illocutionary act: expressive (affirming)	✓					
9. iyá ẹlẹkọ ma ti rọrun àrè <b>mabọ</b> Gloss: the woman who sells pap has <b>gone to heaven where there is no return.</b>	The speaker responded to a customer who came looking for the woman who sells pap.	a. Direct illocutionary act: assertive (informing) b. Indirect illocutionary act: expressive (condoling)	✓					
10. <b>Ori e dáa</b> lórùn ẹ Gloss: <b>Your head is good</b> on your neck.	A mother in reaction to her son's act of slapping his younger brother.	a. Direct illocutionary act: assertive(stating) b. Indirect illocutionary act: expressive (cursing)	✓					
11. Pupo ninu àwọn ọmọ aye isin yii ni ma <b>n'dibọ fún èniyàn</b> Gloss: most children of this generation	The speaker reacting to an experience related to him about a young girl who lied to her parents about going for	a. Direct illocutionary act: assertive (stating) b. Indirect illocutionary act: expressive (affirming)	✓					

<b>Performs magic</b>	an excursion in school.								
12. Inu irora yii ni <b>Obìnrin</b> nàà wa titi ti o fi <b>dáké</b> Gloss: it was in this painful state that the woman kept <b>quiet</b>	The speaker narrating the story about a woman who was charmed to the point that, all she had was taken from her.	a. Direct illocutionary act: assertive (informing) b. Indirect illocutionary act: expressive (sympathizing)	✓						
13. Ọrọ̀ ʼawọ̀n ọ̀lọpa ọ̀ ti ẹ̀ le ti eniyan bá ti mọ̀ ba ti se n'se <b>ọwọ kúdúrí</b> Gloss: There are no so much troubles when an issue that pertains to the police arises so long as the people have learnt to use <b>Short hands.</b>	The speaker reacting to the a comment raised about the policemen being unfaithful and money conscious.	a. Direct illocutionary act: assertive (stating) b. Indirect illocutionary act: directive (advising)	✓						
14. <b>jèdijèdi</b> o'makòwé Gloss: <b>buttocks eater</b> (hemorrhoid) respect not even the educated elite	The speaker in his comment makes jest of the educated elites who was discussed to have a nonchalant attitude towards traditional herbs.	a. Direct illocutionary act: verdictive (stating) b. Indirect illocutionary act: directive (advising, cautioning)	✓						
15. Gbogbo wa yìò <b>jé Ọlọrun ni ipè</b> ọ̀jọ kan bopè boya Gloss: We all shall <b>yield to God's call</b> someday, sooner or later.	The speaker giving a comment about a story narrated about a man who killed a friend of his for money rituals.	a. Direct illocutionary act: assertive (statement) b. Indirect illocutionary act: commissive (assuring)	✓						

<p>16. Peḷu bi won ti se be obinrin naa to, se lo <b>fi àáke kọ ori</b> Gloss: despite all the pleadings, <b>he chose to tangle his head with an axe</b></p>	<p>The speaker talking about a woman whom they tried to persuade not to pack out of the husband's house.</p>	<p>a. Direct illocutionary act: Assertive (informing) b. Indirect illocutionary act: behabitive (criticizing)</p>	✓						
<p>17. dipò ki iyálé mi gba èbè se lo <b>tu itọ sókè fi ojú gbàá</b> Gloss: instead of my first wife to accept apologies, she <b>spat up and received it with the eye.</b></p>	<p>The speaker who is the younger wife had a quarrel with the older wife who has refused to forgive her.</p>	<p>a. Direct illocutionary act: Assertive (informing) b. Indirect illocutionary act: behabitive (condeming)</p>	✓						
<p>18. Nigba ti won de ile iwosan ni won gbo pe Baba ti <b>dá gbére fun ayè</b> Gloss: when they got to the hospital thy had the news that the Father has <b>bid the world good bye.</b></p>	<p>The speaker in his narration stated to the audience that when the family members got to the hospital they heard the news about their fathers demise.</p>	<p>a. Direct illocutionary act: assertive (informing) b. Indirect illocutionary act: behabitive (sympathizing)</p>		✓					
<p>19. <b>Afọfun gbé mu</b> Gloss: <b>One who has swallowed the lungs.</b></p>	<p>The speaker is hurt by what the child has done, thus, he insulted him.</p>	<p>a. Direct illocutionary act: assertive (declaring) b. Indirect illocutionary act: expressive (insulting)</p>	✓						

<p>20. <b>Olórire</b> ọmọ Gloss: A child with a <b>fortunate head.</b></p>	<p>The speaker mimicking a woman's response in reaction to the report that her children stole from the neighbor.</p>	<p>a. Direct illocutionary act: assertive (stating) b. Indirect illocutionary act: behabitive (cursing)</p>	✓						
<p>21. ki ẹníkéni mase banújé Baba ti <b>pa ipò dà</b> Gloss: let no one sorrow anymore, father has <b>changed position.</b></p>	<p>The speaker is consoling others about the death of their father.</p>	<p>a. Direct illocutionary act: directive (urging ) b. Indirect illocutionary act: behabitive (consoling)</p>		✓					
<p>22. Elomi to ko ba iti gba ase lowo pasito tabi alfa ko ni <b>sunmo</b> iyawo re, iyawo ode ni gba ki oko <b>sunmo</b> oun Gloss: Some won't <b>move close</b> to their wives not until they take permission from their Pastor or Imams, and most wives won't even allow their wives <b>come close</b> to them.</p>	<p>The speaker as a reaction to the story narrated about a woman who was hypnotized by a religious leader to get her wealth, states his experience about how people have so much trusted religious leaders to the point that they make major decisions in the home such as when to have sex.</p>	<p>a. Direct illocutionary act: comissives (predictive) b. Indirect illocutionary act: verdictive (warning, advising)</p>	✓						
<p>23. olóyè ti fi ọ wó <b>okùn lé ọ</b> Gloss: the chief has <b>dropped the rope</b></p>	<p>The speaker as an ogboni man announces the death of his comrade.</p>	<p>a. Direct illocutionary act: assertive (informing) b. Indirect illocutionary act: verdictive (declaring)</p>			✓				



<p>24. Ara iwa ibaje ni, oko to fun ni omo, ko wa ma ba ni <b>ajosepò</b>. Gloss: It is a shameful act that you will still <b>Mutual dealings</b>, with a man you gave your daughter to.</p>	<p>The speaker stated this while making his comments on the story narrated about a woman who got pregnant for his son in-law.</p>	<p>a. Direct illocutionary act: commissive (stating) b. Indirect illocutionary act: verdictive (condemning)</p>	✓						
<p>25. Adamu sì <b>mo</b> iyàwó rẹ Gloss: And Adam <b>knew</b> his wife (Genesis 4:1).</p>	<p>The speaker making reference to the bible about Adam and Eve, while giving her comments.</p>	<p>a. Direct illocutionary act: assertive (reporting) b. Indirect illocutionary act: expressive (informing)</p>	✓						

<p>26. Olorun ma jẹ ki ase àgbàkò <b>Kòkòrò éédi</b> Gloss: may the lord help us not to encounter <b>an insect called AIDS</b>.</p>	<p>The speaker as a reaction to what is been discussed about the siblings who had sex prays that God will help us not to contract HIV/AIDS</p>	<p>a. Direct illocutionary act: assertive (praying) b. Indirect illocutionary act: verdictive (advising, warning)</p>	✓						
<p>27. Baba ti rẹ iwàlẹ̀ <b>aṣà</b> Gloss: father has <b>has gone to the land of culture</b></p>	<p>The speaker expresses this in announcing the death of an adult in the society</p>	<p>a. Direct illocutionary act: assertive (informing) b. Indirect illocutionary act: verdictive (announcing)</p>		✓					
<p>28. Omo náà njeun gan se lo <b>fuyé</b> ti mi o ri gbé Gloss: the baby eats a lot, she's so <b>light</b>, I could barely lift her up</p>	<p>The speaker express this in a situation where a baby is big</p>	<p>a. Direct Illocutionary act: assertive (informing) b. Indirect Illocutionary act: expressive (teasing)</p>	✓						

<p><b>29. Ọ̀pòlọ̀pọ̀ awọ̀n alufá igbàlódé ama fi omọ'ori igbá kan bọkan ninu</b> Gloss: most contemporary pastors often use a different calabash cover for another</p>	<p>The speaker states this in response to the story narrated about religious leaders.</p>	<p>a. Direct illocutionary act: expressive (condemning) b. Indirect illocutionary act: directive (advising, warning)</p>	<p>✓</p>						
<p><b>30. Omi lo danu agbé o fo</b> Gloss: It is the water that spills, the calabash is not broken</p>	<p>The speaker is saying this to a woman who has just been delivered of a baby, but has lost the child</p>	<p>a. Direct Illocutionary act: verdictive (stating) b. Indirect Illocutionary act: expressive (consoling)</p>							<p>✓</p>
<p><b>31. wo du du omo okunrin naa gbé emi mi</b> Gloss: They tried their best but the man gave up the ghost</p>	<p>The speaker while narrating the story about the man who had stoke immediately he heard the news about his wife who eloped with all he had.</p>	<p>a. Direct illocutionary act: assertive (reporting) b. Indirect illocutionary act: behabitive (sympathizing )</p>	<p>✓</p>						
<p><b>32. Kọlọrun ma so wa di ẹdun arin lẹ</b> Gloss: May we not be like that specie of monkey which climbs on trees but now walks on the ground.</p>	<p>The speaker states this in response to the story narrated</p>	<p>a. Direct Illocutionary act: assertive (stating) b. Indirect Illocutionary act: expressive (praying)</p>	<p>✓</p>						
<p><b>33. Ki Olorun fun yin ni okun lati gba</b> Gloss: May the lord grant you fortitude to bear the loss</p>	<p>The speaker is comforting a bereaved family who has just lost someone dear to them</p>	<p>a. Direct Illocutionary act: verdictive (prayer) b. Indirect Illocutionary act: expressive</p>							<p>✓</p>

		(condoling)							
34. Olori ọba ti <b>gbé ẹbọ koja orita</b> Gloss: The king's queen <b>has carried the prepared sacrifice, beyond where it is meant to be placed</b>	The speaker states this in a situation where the queen goes against the king's wish	a. Direct Illocutionary act: assertive (reporting) b. Indirect Illocutionary act: expressive (condemning)	✓						
35. kunle ti wa <b>gun'gi ré koja ewé</b> Gloss: kunle has <b>climbed the tree beyond the leaves.</b>	The speaker says to a child who has crossed his bounds, by committing an offense	a. Direct Illocutionary act: assertive (reporting) b. Indirect Illocutionary act: expressive (criticizing)	✓						
36. Ọrẹ rẹ ma ti <b>téri gba asọ</b> Gloss: Your friend has <b>bent his head to receive the cloth.</b>	The speaker is telling someone about the news of the death of his friend	a. Direct illocutionary act: assertive (informing) b. Indirect illocutionary act: behabitive (mocking)	✓						
37. Ọkùnrin náà <b>bá iyàwó oni iyàwó lò pọ,</b> Gloss: the man <b>related with</b> another man's wife	The speaker tells the audience in his comment that the man had sex with another man's wife	a. Direct illocutionary act: assertive (reporting) b. Indirect illocutionary act: expressive (criticizing)	✓						
38. Amope ọ lókà ti <b>fi ilẹ se asọ bora</b> Gloss: Amope the yam flour seller has <b>used the ground as covering cloth</b>	The speaker tries to inform a fellow about the death of someone close who sells yam flour	a. Direct illocutionary act: assertive (informing) b. Indirect illocutionary act: expressive (sympathizing)	✓						
39. Obinrin náà	The speaker	a. Direct							

<p><b>tinrin</b> pupọ de ibi wipe oju ọna ko gbáà mo Gloss: the lady is so <b>slim</b> to the extent that she could barely pass through the door</p>	<p>making jest of a woman who is fat.</p>	<p>Illocutionary act: assertive (stating) b. Indirect Illocutionary act: behabitive (teasing)</p>	✓						
<p><b>40.</b> Gbe enu esi oun Oba o ku amo o ti <b>wàjà</b> Gloss: keep quiet the king has <b>entered into the ceiling</b></p>	<p>The speaker in the kings palace shuts down one who has come to give the news about the death of the king</p>	<p>a. Direct illocutionary act: assertive (reporting, informin b. Indirect illocutionary act: verdictive (declaring)</p>		✓					
<p><b>41.</b> Yv: Orun mu , ile náà si <b>tutu</b> Gloss: it is sunny, the ground is <b>cold</b></p>	<p>The speaker telling the mother that the weather is hot and the ground is hot</p>	<p>a. Direct Illocutionary act: assertive (informing) b. Indirect Illocutionary act: behabitive (teasing)</p>	✓						
<p><b>42.</b> Iya samueli eya <b>sin omo yii ni gbéré ipàkó</b> Gloss: you would have <b>circumcised him behind the head</b></p>	<p>The speaker telling the mother to give warnings to her child.</p>	<p>a. Direct Illocutionary act: assertive (stating) b. Indirect Illocutionary act: directive (advising)</p>	✓						
<p><b>43.</b> Ejẹ ka <b>dúpé fun igbe ayé dara dara</b> Gloss: let's <b>thank God for a life well spent</b></p>	<p>The speaker in a funeral service condoling the bereaved.</p>	<p>a. Direct Illocutionary act: directive (commanding ) b. Indirect illocutionary act: expressive</p>							✓

		(advising condoling)						
<b>44. Olúwa yio fi ofo ra emi</b> Gloss: <b>The lord will purchase lives with the losses.</b>	The speaker comforting one who has lost his goods either to robbers or fire.	a. Direct Illocutionary act: verdictive (prayer) b. Indirect Illocutionary act: commissive (consoling)						✓
<b>45. Olorun aje ki ojo jina si ara</b> Gloss: <b>The lord will make the days far from the other</b>	The anchor of the programme comforting his co-worker whose mother has just died.	a. Direct Illocutionary act: verdictive (prayer) b. Indirect Illocutionary act: expressive (consoling)						✓
<b>46. Akápò ti se alaisi</b> Gloss: the treasurer has become <b>one who is no more.</b>	The speaker breaks the news of the death of the treasurer	a. Direct illocutionary act: assertive (informing) b. Indirect illocutionary act: expressive (condoling)	✓					
<b>47. Okunrin to ba ko gbogbo dukiya le obinrin lowo, oun lo ile niyen o</b> Gloss: A man who keeps his wealth with a woman is ready for <b>home.</b>	The speaker states this in his comments on the custom who kept all the money he had in his wife's account, who eventually died of stroke as the woman ran off with all the money.	a. Direct illocutionary act: assertive (informing) b. Indirect illocutionary act: expressive (warning, advising)	✓					
<b>48. Eje ka sara giri Baba ti sun ninu oluwa</b> Gloss: Let's be	The speaker in a funeral service of a Christian says this to the	a. Direct illocutionary act: assertive (informing)		✓				

strong, father has <b>slept in the lord.</b>	congregation to comfort them.	b. Indirect illocutionary act: behabitive (condoling)						
<b>49.</b> ohun è wò ní kí òkò òlòkò máa <b>bá aya aláya sùn</b> Gloss: it is forbidden for another man's husband to <b>sleep with</b> another man's wife.	The speaker in her comment raised this issue that it is a forbidden thing for a man to have sex with another man's wife.	a. Direct illocutionary act: assertive (stating) b. Indirect illocutionary act: directive (forbidding)	✓					
<b>50.</b> Kagba <b>owo koto</b> tabi <b>owo kobe</b> , iyen common si gbogbo alopa ni Nigeria. Gloss: it is common to the Nigerian police to receive bribe.	The speaker in his comment is reacting to the story narrated about a custom officer who is known for collecting bribes.	a. Direct illocutionary act: assertive (stating) b. Indirect Illocutionary Act: directive (condemning)	✓					

## Discussion

Some experiences are too intimate and vulnerable to be discussed without linguistic safeguards; one of them is death. As Allan Burridge (1991:153) has argued that “it is a fear based taboo” in which different fears co-exist; fear of corruption of the body, fear of evil spirits, and the fear of what comes after death. The dread to look at death full in the face is especially noted in the Yoruba society such that, they feel reluctant to deal with subjects relating to death using straight forward terms. It is believed that words associated with death possesses some force in that to speak the word ‘death’ is to draw death’s attention. Hence, euphemistic alternatives are created by language users to soften the effects of what they actually intend to communicate to the listeners. Amidst the various euphemisms presented in table 2 above, there are those associated with death which are fully expressed in utterances 1, 5, 12, 15, 18, 21, 31, 36, 46, 47, and 48 in

euphemistic expressions such as; *jade laye, si owo ise, di oloogbe, dake, je olorun- ni- ipe, dagbere fun aye, pa ipo da, gbe –emi-mi, teri- gba- aso, se- alaisi, lo- ile and sun- ninu- oluwa*. They are often employed by speakers in the language to avoid the direct use of the expression death which could pose threats to others or the addressee as some may end up fainting at the break of the news.

However, the table also presents other contexts of which euphemisms could be used to discuss death related issue. This relates to that used exclusively to announce the death of kings as they are seen as next to the gods. It is expressed in utterance 40 with the word *waja (to enter into the ceiling) as* it is a taboo to announce that the king is dead since it is believed that they do not die but rather transcend into another realm. The other context within which euphemism is used for death is when an ‘ogboni’ cult member and an Adult dies in the society; expressions such as that used in utterances 23 and 27, *fi owo okun le ile* and *re wale asa* are employed to accord respect to them. These euphemisms as presented in table 2 are used by the speakers directly and indirectly to perform certain acts which helps us to understand the intentions of the speakers. For example; the first euphemism is used by the speaker to perform an assertive function directly and a behabitive act indirectly, of which the speaker was reporting the incidence to the listeners and also sympathizing with them as well.

Furthermore, some speakers in the use of the euphemistic expressions to break the news of death in the various contexts, maintains the generosity maxim in that they try to be sensitive to the feelings of the addressee by using a more subtle expression which would mitigate the threat the news they wish to pass across might pose to the addressees for instance, utterances 1, 21 and 48. They minimise benefit and maximise cost to themselves. The tact maxim is also adhered to by the speakers in utterances, 5,12,15,18,31,16 46 and 47 of which the speakers maximise

benefit to the addressees and minimise cost to them, by avoiding the mention of that which could pose threats to them. Moreover, the approbation maxim was also adhered to by speakers in the context where the death of a king or a renowned person in the society is to be announced i.e. utterances 23, 27, 40 and 48 so as to minimise dispraise of others and to uphold politeness as regards to the cultural norm of which due respect is accorded to them even in death.

Table 2 also presents certain euphemistic expressions used in the Yoruba society as most people, especially parents often prefer to avoid the direct use of swear words, when addressing their children in anger. They often settle for positive euphemisms as cover terms which usually help to soften the actual meaning of the words they wish to express. These euphemisms as presented in the table are expressed in utterances 10, 19 and 20 in euphemistic expressions; *ori e daa lorun e, Afofun gbe mu, olorire omo*. Using these expressions by Yoruba parents indicate that the child has offended some way but the parent has caution his or herself to use the positive which is an opposite of that which he intends to communicate which is negative and is a curse on the child. These euphemisms are thereby used by speakers to perform various functions directly or indirectly such as; assertive acts of declaring, stating or affirming and expressive acts of insulting and cursing. However, most speakers in their use of these euphemisms adhere to the tact maxims as they try to minimise cost to the addressee and maximise benefit to them. This is done by suppressing that which they intend to convey so as to uphold politeness and to avoid that which could be impolite or offensive in conversations.

Utterances 22, 24, 25, 37 and 49 present euphemisms for sexual related issues, an aspect of which the Yoruba society frowns at an open discussion, especially in formal settings or contexts where children are involved. People in discussing issues related to this, often replace them with less strong connotative expressions such as euphemisms which could be metaphorical



sometimes. Instances of them as presented in the table are; *sunmo, ajosepo, mo, ba-lo-po, ba-sun*. This type of euphemisms can be classified under the negative euphemism as Rawson (1981) puts it that they are often used to deflate or eradicate from the language what people prefer not to deal with directly.

However, they are used by the speaker to perform various actions from assertive acts directly to indirect acts indirectly with multiple functions, such as; warning, criticizing, forbidding, cautioning etc. These euphemistic expressions as used in the utterances by the speakers mainly adhere to the tact maxim as a means to substitute the desired information they wish to convey so as to minimise or reduce cost and other negative effects the direct expressions could have on the listeners. For instance the euphemism for sex, *ajosepo* as used in one of the utterances which means ‘mutual dealing’ is used by the speaker as a substitute to tone down that which he intends to convey which could sound harsh. Thus the tact maxim is maintained by the speaker with the use of the euphemism by minimising cost to the addressee.

Yorùbas in discussing different issues, sometimes choose to be meticulous such that they try to present some topics which may sound rude or offensive in a polite manner during discussions. Table 2 presents some common euphemisms used as substitutes for words that could seem impolite when said directly, especially restricted words known as taboos, which should not be mentioned directly in public. These set of euphemisms are euphemisms used for; bribe, offences, impertinent behaviour, deceit, deliberate understatement, one who is presumptuous or when a secret is exposed. They are expressed in utterances 2, 11, 12, 16, 17, 28, 29,32, 34, 35,39, 41,42, and 50 in expressions such as; *akara tu si epo, gun igi re koja ewe, owo kuduru, owo koto etc*. These euphemisms are courteous speech acts used by speakers both directly and indirectly as used in the table to reveal the various intentions of the speakers. However, most of the

euphemisms adhered to the Tact maxims of which cost was minimised and benefit was maximised to the addressee. For instance utterances 50 and 12, used by the speaker to avoid a direct mention of the word bribe so as to protect the image of the subjects

Moreover, these euphemisms were used mainly to adhere to the social right norms of the society of which it is unacceptable to use certain expressions. For instance, euphemisms used as litotes, of which it is a taboo to say that one is overweight ‘fat, big, heavy or too thin’, the opposite is used. Thus, instead of saying ‘the baby is big, fat or heavy’ it is more polite and face saving to say that the child is slim or light. So the euphemism for (big/ heavy) *tobi or wuwo* would be *fuyẹ* (light), while for (fat), *tinrin* meaning (slim). It is also a taboo to say that one’s temperature is too high or to say that the ground is too hot on a sunny day as it is believed that saying this will only increase the intensity rather than reduce it; thus the speaker when talking about this, settles for the opposite ‘cold’.

The table also presented euphemisms used for condolences by Yoruba speakers in consoling the bereaved or victims who have lost one thing or the other. Utterances 1, 6,30,33,43,44 and 45 captures this with expressions such as; *Aku ara fe ara ku, Olorun ni fifun ni ti si gba, Omi lo danu, agbe o foo, Ki olorun fun yin ni okun ati gbaa, Eje ka dupe fun igbe aye dara dara, Olorun aje ki ojo jina si ara etc.* With these euphemisms, the bereaved is often consoled to give thanks for a life well spent and even in all situations rather than mourn. It reveals the helplessness of man in death and over death, because ordinarily the loss of a person or a child should not bring about thanks of any sort, thus rather than to encourage the addressees to mourn, they are encouraged to give thanks. The table also presents other euphemisms used in condoling victims in other situations aside death. One of such euphemisms, is that used in condoling one whose goods has been stolen or whose house and property is burnt in fire incident. These euphemisms

are used by the speaker as courteous speech acts to express sympathy and as a means to avoid giving the victims a reminder about what has befallen them. They are used by the speakers to obey the sympathy maxim of which antipathy is minimised to both the speakers and the addressees and sympathy is maximised. For example; *Ọlọrun a fi ofo ra ẹ mi* meaning; *God will replace the losses with lives*. The speaker in the use of the euphemism tries to console and restore hope to the victim by stating that life is more important than properties, in that if one is still alive one can still gather more than he has lost.

Furthermore, words that relate to human sexual organs and other sensitive parts of the human body are not just been discussed freely in their lucid forms in the Yoruba society. People often shy away from topics related to them, so as not to be tagged as been loosed and uncultured. Thus, euphemistic expression such as the one presented in utterance 7 expressed in the word *kinni* (something) have often been used as substitute for obscene and profane word, in that most people often feel more comfortable to use it other than the actual word *oko* 'penis'. In the use of this euphemism, the speaker's intention was projected both directly and indirectly as he performs an assertive act of informing and an expressive act of mocking or condemning religious leaders who tax their members. However, the tact maxim was adhered to by the speaker as he employed the euphemism as a means to minimise cost to the hearers as well as maximise benefits to them.

Lastly, due to the magical beliefs that a direct mention of the name of certain diseases is an invite to the diseases, some euphemisms were presented in table 2 in utterances 3, 4, 14, which are expressed in words such as; *Olode, Aarun ko gboogun and Jedijedi*. They are often used in discussing issues that relates to sickness and diseases such that they serve as cover terms to lessen the actual meaning of some words so as to avoid their adverse effects. These types of

euphemisms are often used to adhere to social rights that are ideal and acceptable in the society, such that they concur with what is socially acceptable in the society by using these euphemisms. For example, the euphemism *olode* (small pox) used in utterance 3, is a conventional euphemism accepted to be used in the society as a means to avoid an invite of the disease when the actual word is mentioned. However, the euphemisms as used by the speakers, project the intentions of the speakers as they are used to perform directly and indirectly assertive, verdictive and directive acts of stating, warning, cautioning and advising. They are also used to uphold politeness by the speakers as they adhere mainly to the tact maxim in discussing issues that relates to disease and sickness by reducing cost to the hearers and maximising benefits to them.

### 4.3 Statistical Analysis of Speech Acts

A number of observations have been made regarding the Speech Act performed in the use of the euphemisms, which are grouped into the direct and indirect acts, using a combination of Austin’s (1962) and Searle’s (1977) classifications of Speech Acts.

Table 1: Summary of Direct Illocutionary Acts

Type of Speech Act	Frequency	Percentage
Verdictives	05	10.0%
Assertive	39	78.0%
Commissives	02	4.0%
Behabitives	0	0%
Directives	01	2.0%
Expressives	03	6.0%
Total:	50	100%

From the study, it can be deduced that the assertive act ranks as the highest Direct Speech Act performed by the interlocutors in their use of euphemisms with 78.0%. This is demonstrated by the use of the euphemisms as they mostly commit the speaker to the truth of the proposition expressed. They are used to make assertions, statements, reports, claims e.t.c directly by the speakers.

The verdictive act ranked second with 10.0% as some of the euphemisms used by the speakers in the utterances presented for analysis are typified by giving verdicts. Commissive act expressive act and the directive act ranks the lowest with 6.0%, 4.0% and 2.0% respectively, as they have less potent force in the use of euphemisms directly by speakers in communication.

Table 2: Summary of Indirect Illocutionary Acts

Speech Act type	Frequency	Percentage
Verdictives	07	14.0%
Assertive	0	0%
Commissives	02	4.0%
Behabitives	10	20.0%
Directives	08	16.0%
Declaratives	0	0%
Expressives	23	58.0%
TOTAL:	50	100%

As shown in the table above, the expressive act which occurs 23 times with 58.0%, ranks as the highest Indirect Speech Act performed by the interlocutors in their use of euphemism in the utterances presented for analysis. Possibly because they tend to indirectly express the

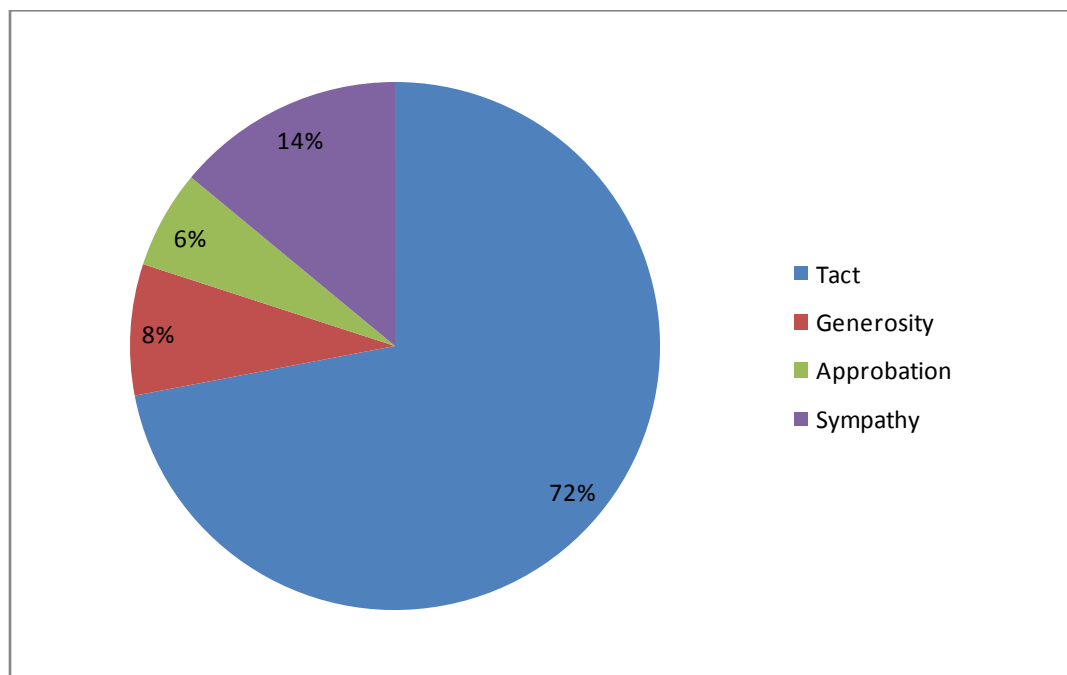
psychological state of the speakers and the hearers in conversations as exemplified by illocutionary forces such as; thanking, congratulating, apologizing, forgiving, and appreciating e.t.c.

The verdictive act, occurring 7 times with 14.0% ranked as the second, as some of the euphemisms used by the speakers are used indirectly to give verdicts or pass judgments. While the behabitive acts which occur 10 times with 20.0%, ranks as the third, being that some speakers in their use of the euphemisms in the utterances presented for analysis, perform acts that reflects their social behaviour, attitudes and feelings. This is typified with illocutionary forces such as criticizing, condoling, sympathizing, mocking, teasing, congratulating e.t.c.

The directive acts occurring 8 times with 16.0% appears to be the fourth as it is demonstrated in the use of some of the euphemistic substitute by the speaker to get the hearer to do something through forces such as; ordering, requesting, asking, entreating e.t.c.

Furthermore, the commissive acts which occur 2 times with 4.0% alongside the assertive and declarative acts which occurs 0 times with 0% respectively, ranks the lowest as a result of their low potent force in the use of euphemisms to perform acts indirectly. Speakers do not often perform with the use of euphemisms indirect acts which commits the speaker to some future actions or proposition expressed; neither do they bring about the affairs specified in communication. Thus, it can be said that the direct speech act performed in the use of euphemisms in Yoruba Language is mostly assertive since they elicit proposition subject to further consideration, while the indirect acts performed in the use of euphemisms are mostly expressive acts as they often express the speaker's psychological state, feelings and attitude toward some events and affairs in conversations.

### 4. 3.1. Occurrence of Maxims



This section brings out the most occurring Politeness maxims and the least occurring ones from the analysis carried out. The maxims analysed are; Tact, Generosity, Approbation, Agreement, Modesty and Sympathy.

Tact Maxim: the tact maxim is the mostly adhered maxim which occur 36times with 72.0% in the euphemisms analysed, as it was mostly used by the speakers to uphold politeness. This is so because the speakers in their use of these euphemisms try to be courteous and not to hurt or displease their interlocutors by avoiding that which might bring offence or hurt. Thus, they make sure in their use of euphemistic expression, cost is minimised and benefit is maximised to hearers. This is reflected in table 2, utterance 34 as the euphemistic expression, ‘Gbe ebo koja orita’ obeys the tact maxim; the speaker uses it to avoid that which he intends to convey that the

queen has overstepped her bounds by going against the king's decree which might seem disrespectful to the Queen and even the entire royal house if said directly.

Generosity maxim: this occurred 4 times with 8.0% in the analysis. They are adhered to by the speakers as a means to minimise benefit and maximise cost to themselves so as to maintain politeness.

Approbation Maxim: the speakers as a means to avoid saying unpleasant things about others especially the addressees try to minimise the dispraise of other. Thus the approbation maxim occurred 3 times in the analysis with 6.0%, as a means to uphold politeness and to avoid that which could damage the image of both addressee and the speaker.

Sympathy Maxim: this occurred about 7 times with 14.0% as presented in the analysis. It was employed by the speaker as a courteous speech act to express condolences in that, they were used to minimise antipathy and maximise sympathy between the speaker and the addressee. However the Modesty and Agreement maxims never reflected at all. This is based on the fact that the use of euphemisms in Yoruba does not entail praise of self nor agreement between interlocutors but seeks to maintain good relations with others void of offence. Therefore it can be deduced from the analysis that in the use of euphemisms in Yoruba Language, speakers mostly adhere to the tact maxims, for numerous reasons such as; to save face and protect one's image, obey social rules or norms, avoid vulgar or rude expressions, or show respect and mitigate threats.

#### **4.4 General Discussion**

Crystal (1985: 240) describes Pragmatics as 'the study of language from the point of view of users especially of the choices they make, constraints they encounter in using language in social



interaction and the effect their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication'. This definition encapsulates aspects of taboo, euphemism and politeness, as it views language from the point of view of users, in that due to certain rules placed on some words, certain choices has to be made by language users to employ euphemistic expressions for such words, so as to be polite to others and to save their face.

Aside, the functions of euphemisms given by Farb (1974), inputs from the interviews conducted on some informants presented in the appendix, under the title interview 1-3, have also helped to point out some other functions of euphemisms in the language under study. In response to the interview questions, one of the interviewees explained that, there is no special time assigned for the use of euphemisms by Yoruba speakers in conversations as they are often used all the time and in most situations, since the Yoruba's do not like to talk shabbily, inconsiderate or an unfair manner in public. This can be seen in the utterances collected from the discourse in the program in that the audiences in addressing various issues raised in the program employed euphemisms as a means to sound polite and courteous; a good example of this is the euphemistic expression used in utterance 7 as presented in table 2. Furthermore, the interviewee pointed out that euphemisms are used between friends who do not intend to hurt each other, to ask for forgiveness, to settle rifts between people especially in the kings court, to reduce the length of words so as to save time, to give direction, to teach moral lessons, to sound warnings and to give better understanding and meaning to some expressions for the sake of the listeners. This can be seen in utterances 47, and 42 in table 2 which was used to sound warnings and utterances 45, 33, 1 and others which was used to comfort and to avoid hurting a friend. They also made it known that the use of these euphemisms largely depends on age, in that it is the elders unlike the children who usually know that certain words might sound harsh

or offensive when uttered; thus, they see the need for the use of euphemistic substitutes. This is shown in table 1 from the results of the word and sentence compilation task administered to speakers of Yoruba from different age groups. It is glaring that few of the speakers from the younger age group had the knowledge of euphemistic equivalents for the words provided unlike the adults who even produced two equivalents to some words. Moreover, the level of exposure of the younger ones to the use of euphemisms could also help them to be conversant with it, such that children who are exposed to the use of euphemisms at an early stage could use it the same way an adult would use it, but it has been observed that adults often use it more than the children amidst themselves.

In this study, attempts have been made to analyse the various euphemisms used in Yoruba language in various situations in conversations using some pragmatic elements to look into the various acts performed in the use of these euphemisms and the extent to which politeness is adhered.

#### **4.5 Findings**

From the analysis carried out, the following findings obtain;

- i. The negative euphemism is prevalently used in Yoruba Language. This is shown in the euphemisms presented in the analysis as they were used by the speakers mainly as a means to avoid one taboo or the other since taboo is a major component of the Yoruba society. This finding is confirmed by Rawson (1981:1) who describes negative euphemisms as those euphemisms which mainly deflate, diminish and offset the power of tabooed terms, by eradicating completely from the language what people often prefer not to talk about directly.
- ii. Another finding from the study is predicated on the fact that in Yoruba Language, euphemisms mostly perform assertive acts directly and indirectly, expressive acts, as they help in projecting

the speaker's intention in speech interaction. The indirect illocutionary act is however seen to exhibit more complexities than the direct act as it expressed limitless functions such as, advising, insulting, greeting, consoling, judging, warning, claiming, blaming e.t.c, which all contribute to the overall interpretation of the euphemism. This confirms Saeed's (2003) view, that;

learning to communicate in a language involves more than acquiring the pronunciation and grammar; there's a need to learn how to ask questions, make suggestions, greet and thank other speaker. There is also a need to learn the uses to which utterances are conventionally put in the new language community and how these uses are signaled.

- iii. Euphemisms in Yoruba mainly adhere to the tact maxims by minimising cost and maximising benefits to others in communication. The study confirms Leech's (1983) view that; Other than the CP which enables one participant in a conversation to communicate on the assumption that the other participant is being cooperative, the PP has a higher regulative role to maintain the social equilibrium and the friendly relations which enable us to assume that our interlocutors are being cooperative in the first place. Therefore predicated on this view, the study finds that in the use of euphemisms by Yoruba speakers politeness is given higher rating than cooperation as impolite expressions are minimised and polite expressions are maximized to save face and to mitigate threats.
- iv. A good number of Yoruba speakers who belong to the younger age group (20-35) have little or no understanding at all of the use of euphemisms in Yoruba Language and thus, do not use them in conversations. This is demonstrated by the results got from word and sentence compilation task administered to the respondents as most respondents who fall under the ages of 20 to 35

had no idea of the euphemisms for the words written, while those between the ages of 50 and above had enough answers to the extent of writing more than one euphemism equivalence.

- v. Context of use plays a crucial role in the use of euphemisms as most meanings and interpretations of euphemisms in Yoruba Language are subject to their usage in a contextually conventional language environment. One of the findings of the study lies in the fact that context is the key determinant of meaning in the analysis of Yoruba euphemisms as most meanings and interpretations are subject to their usage in contextual language environment. This is confirmed by the view given by Malinowski (1946) which explains the inevitability and the importance of context in pragmatic studies and in the use of Yoruba euphemisms in particular, that;

the conception of meaning as contained in utterance is false and futile. A statement spoken in real life is never detached from the situation in which it has been expressed. A work without linguistic context is a mere fabrication and stands for nothing by itself.

- vi. The finding of this study also confirms Enright's (1985:13) view that, "without euphemism, the rotation of the world would have stopped rubbing and would have been flooded with feud." It demonstrates the fact that euphemisms are inevitable in Yoruba Language if the speakers are to manifest politeness and linguistic chastity as culturally required, since euphemism lubricates language and minimises the possibility of conflict in conversations so as to safeguard or protect the integrity of the interlocutors in communication.
- vii. Euphemisms in Yoruba Language have great pedagogical implications as regards the teaching of Yoruba euphemisms at home by parents and at school by Yoruba teachers which could aide effective communication since it is known to be part of the well recognised languages in Nigeria. It also gives the teacher the task of going beyond the normal rules of lexis and grammar to the rules of interactional norms prevalent in the society which will help the younger Yoruba

speakers in the understanding and use of euphemisms in conversations. This will help save the language from going into extinction.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

#### 5.1 Summary

This study examined the euphemisms used in Yoruba Language and how they are used by the Yoruba speakers in modulating interpersonal relationships in human communication. The study aimed at highlighting some of the euphemisms collected in Yoruba Language and are subjected to analysis using some pragmatic elements. The literature review is divided into two; topical and authorial reviews. In the topical review, topical issues such as: Language and Context, Linguistic Relativity, Euphemism; etymology, definition, features and classifications, Pragmatics, Context, Speech Act Theory, Cooperative Maxims and Politeness Theory were reviewed, while in the authorial review past studies on euphemisms were also reviewed with the theoretical framework the study adopts for analysis.

The study adopted an eclectic framework of which elements of Pragmatics such as; Speech Act Theory, and the Politeness Theory were combined to analyse the data collected to arrive at the findings of the study. A triangulation method which combines; recorded semi structured interview, downloaded episodes of programme on T.V and a word and sentence compilation task was used in collecting the data from the speakers of the language. The study therefore tabulated and examined these data collected from the speakers of Yoruba to show how they are used to achieve effective communication in the language.

The findings revealed that a large number of Yoruba speakers, who belong to the younger age group of 20-35 have little or no understanding at all of the use of euphemisms in Yoruba language, thus, they do not use them in conversations. It also reflects the fact that in the use of

euphemisms politeness is given so much credence as speakers strongly focus on pleasing others than self. From the analysis presented in the study, it is glaring how euphemism responds fundamentally to social interdiction in that with the prime aim to maintain interpersonal ties and safeguard the image of the speaker and the addressee, the tact maxims is mostly adhered to.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

The study has attempted to examine the euphemisms used in Yoruba Language by the Yoruba speakers as a set of speech events that are fundamental for a successful communication. From the analysis presented in the study, it is glaring how euphemism responds fundamentally to social interdiction in that with the prime aim to maintain interpersonal ties and safeguard the image of the speaker and the addressee, the tact maxims is mostly adhered to. Therefore, in the use of euphemisms in Yoruba Language politeness is maximised and impoliteness is minimised as speakers often minimise cost to others and also maximise benefit to others in a way to make conversation progress in a satisfactory manner. Hence, underlying the use of euphemisms in Yoruba Language is the projection of politeness.

The study has shown that the euphemisms used by Yoruba speakers are characterised by assertive acts directly and indirectly, expressive acts, as they help in projecting the speaker's intention in speech interaction. The indirect illocutionary act is however seen to exhibit more complexities than the direct act as it expressed limitless functions such as, advising, insulting, greeting, consoling, judging, warning, claiming, blaming e.t.c, which all contribute to the overall interpretation of the euphemism. It also shows that context of use plays a crucial function in the use of euphemisms as most meanings and interpretations of euphemisms in Yoruba Language are subject to their usage in a contextually conventional language environment.

### **5.3 Contributions to English Studies**

This study affords Yoruba users of English Language the opportunity to tap into the rich array of Yoruba euphemisms in order to enhance their spoken and written expressions. Furthermore, Yoruba euphemism is relevant to English study because it significantly contributes to the development of the notion of “Nigerian English” which is highly influenced by imports from indigenous Nigerian languages. The research also establishes the universality of euphemism and its functions in all languages, above all, its pedagogical implication is essential in that, it facilitates the teaching, learning, interpretation and understanding of English as used by Yoruba native speakers. More so, since English Language is a popular medium of communication, translating and analysing Yoruba euphemisms in English, helps to preserve the Yoruba cultural heritage since Yoruba euphemisms largely embodies aspects of Yoruba.

### **5.4 Suggestion for Further Research**

A study of this nature cannot claim to have done justice to all aspects of euphemisms in Yoruba Language as it relates to linguistic studies. This research can however be continued, by looking into the use of euphemisms in Yoruba proverbs from a sociolinguistic perspective, as it will help to identify some other functions of euphemisms in Yoruba Language. The study also suggests that euphemisms be studied in other areas of Linguistics, such as CDA, as a Critical Discourse Analysis of the use of euphemisms in selected Yoruba conversations can also be carried out.



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## APPENDIXES

### Appendix A

**This is a sample of the word and sentence compilation task administered to Yoruba speakers, to evaluate their knowledge of Yoruba euphemisms.**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND LITERARY STUDIES  
FACULTY OF ARTS  
AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, ZARIA**

My name is Kemi Mosunmola Ayigun and I am a postgraduate student from the above named Department and University. I am conducting a research on the topic; “A Pragmatic Analysis of Yoruba Euphemisms”. Euphemisms are mild words used to replace harsh or offensive words; they are used to show politeness, so as not to sound rude to others. Euphemism in Yoruba is known as “Adape oro” or “Afiyo Pa Oro” meaning rubbing words with salt.

This is called WORD AND SENTENCE COMPILATION TASK, in which it is required that you produce two or more euphemisms, to the ten words written below and if possible with their meanings. Depending on your level of knowledge about them, please I would also like you to write down other words you know in Yoruba language and their euphemisms. Thank you.

Age group (please tick) a. **20- 35** ( ) b. **35 - 50** ( ) c. **50 and above** ( )

#### **Word (oro)**

#### **Euphemism (Adape oro)**

- |                                   |                               |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| a. <b>Iku</b> : (death)           | waja (enter into the ceiling) |
|                                   | se alaisi (is not available)  |
| 1. <b>Were</b> (madness)          | 6. <b>Obo</b> (virginal)      |
| 2. <b>Okobo</b> (impotent)        | 7. <b>Asewo</b> (prostitute)  |
| 3. <b>Loyun</b> (pregnancy)       | 8. <b>Iyo</b> (salt)          |
| 4. <b>Ya igbe</b> (feaces)        | 9. <b>Oko</b> (penis)         |
| 5. <b>Nkan osu</b> (menstruation) | 10. <b>Ole</b> (thief)        |

## Appendix B

### SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

#### INTERVIEW 1

##### Semi Structured interview with Mr. Ebenezer Edun

**Researcher:** Ekaro sir

**Informant:** Ekaro ma o, se dada laji

**Researcher:** Adupe sir.

**Researcher:** ejowo sir ma fe mo oruko yin

**Informant:** oruko mi ni Ebenezer Edun

**Researcher:** lati ilu ibo sir?

**Informant:** lati ilu Abeokuta ni Ogun State

**Researcher:** esun gan sir

**Informant:** ko to pe

**Researcher:** daddy mo n' se ise lori awon oro ti ape ni 'adape' ni ede Yoruba, mo ma fe ki eso nipa imo yin lori won, ati akoko ti ama n'lo won. Nje won ti le wa ni ede Yoruba?

**Informant:** well.. Youba wa, then adape oro si tun wa, ari wipe ani owe. Yoruba ni ti owe ba sonu, oro lafin wa, then awon adape wa. Just like ehenn... instead ti eniyan ba ku, oni bi ase ma daape ti a fi ni so pato nnkan ti osele. Akoko ti aba so wipe *okunrin naa bu ile je* ale ni iru okunrin be ti ku tabi o *se alaisi*, a de tun le le **ri** iru eni be bi eni ti ori re kope , tabi oni skan-skan lori, sugbon instead ta fi ma pe e ni were ale ni ewo okunrin ti bu ile je..bi iye se lo niyen

Taba tun te si iwaju ari wipe ani awon aisan kan lori si risi lori ile ede wa , ninu e ni *aarun ko gboogun* wa, ari wipe eniyan le ko nipa *biba obinrin lopo* koda ti aba jo ba owo papo, ose se ki aisan yii ma ran enikeji, sugbon bi eje ba ti kan ara won, so, kaka ti afi ma so wipe 'Eedi' ale ni 'aah lagbaja bayi ko aarun ko gboogun'. Then another one is this... ti aba so wipe eniyan di *oologbe* ari wipe ni ile Yoruba eni ti oba ku, oun ni ama nsabaa lo adape oro yii fun, ti gbogbo awon to baje Yoruba ba gbo wa ti mo wipe iru eni bayii ti ku niyen. Ari wipe, igba miiran ti awon Yoruba n'ba soro wa ni ki ama pe aja lobo, wipe eni to batiku kaso wipe oti ku. Sugbon ni adape oro wa ni iru eni bee ti di oologbe.

Ti aba tun so wipe *Olorun ni fun ni ti si gba pada* , ara awon adape naa tun ni, ose se pe obinrin loyun ti ko de le da omo naa bi, ti won wa se ise abe fun, to wa je pe , igba ti won ma gbe omo naa jade , oti di oku, iya re de si wa laye, won le lo adape oro wipe , olurun ni fi funi ti si gba pada, won ti le le lo fun eniyan to je kristieni ti eniyan re ku.

Bi eniyan ba tun n'jeun lowo, boya ore re kan de tabi ninu awon ti won ji jo n'gbe , boya eni kan fe ran ni ise pe 'lagbaja wa lo ra nnkan wa' o le dahun pe *oba ni' nje* o, ti eniyan bati so



bayii ni ile Yoruba , won to mo wipe iru eni be n'jeun lowo ti ko si fe dide ni akoko to n'jeun. Bakanna ni taba so wipe '*iya eleko tabi lagbaja ti rorun are mabo*' eleyi tumo si wipe eni to ti ku ti a o le ri mo , tori wipe orun je ibi ti eniyan n'lo ti kii pada. Omi to tun je adape ni boya omo... gege bi ase mo wipe bibeli ni ka to omo wa ko le fun wa ni isinmi, ari wipe boya a ran omo ni ise ti kowa je ise naa daada, tabi ko se ise naa bi ase fe, but tori wipe kristeni ni eniyan ti asi mo wipe ase nbe lori ahon wa , kaka ki a fi ma se epe tabi so oro odi ti oda si omo, ale so wipe ori e daa lorun e. Ti aba so eleyi, iru omo bee ati mo pe oun to oun se kodaa, sugbon iya ofe so oro odi sohun. Gege bi mo se so orisirisi omo lowa, taba so wipe afofungbe mu ole tunmo si omo to kan se bi ago, to se bi eni ti ko gbon; iru omo be amo pe oye ki oun se atunse.

Ara awon adape noni ka so wipe eniyan pa ipo da, gege bi kristieni ti aba fe tu ifo fun eniyan nipa wiwo ipo ti awon eniyan wa nigba mi, o le je jade ninu adura pe ki eniken mase banuje, ka mase ronubi eni ti ko ni oye, won le ni ati pe baba sodo tabi baba ti pa ipo da ti ako ba fe lamole pe baba ti ku. Nitari wipe orisirisi awon eniyan lowa, to ba kan so fun elomiran wipe lagbaja ku, ole fainti, amo ni ile Yoruba, adape oro noni wipe eniyan *pa ipo da*.

Omiiran tu ni Omi lo danu agbe ofo, bi mo ti so siwaju, ale lo adape oro yii fi sipe fun obinrin ti o bi omo, ti omo naa wa ku, ama n'so wipe omi lo danu agbe o foo. Omi lomo, agbe ni iya, ama n' lo nigba ti iya o ti ku amon ti oba je wipe iya lo ku a o le lo. ti won ba so eleyi oti ma ye awon eniyan oun ti wo fe so.

Bakanna ko si ibi ti ati ma n' so wipe oba ku ni le Yoruba, sugbon n'ti ama nso ni wipe 'oba wo aja'. Akii so wipe oba ku, ibi kibi ti won ba ti so eleyi, wo ma ni 'gbe enu e soun , ki ni nnkan ti oun so, oba oku, oba wo aja ni'. Adape milran tun ni ka si eni ni gbera ipako, eleyi tunmo si ka pe eni loye pada si bose wa tele , tabi ti iru nnkan ti eni be base kodara to, ale pe akiyesi si; tabi osi awon kan kan ti eni be omo, wo le ni 'wo lagbaja owa si omo re ni igbako' ati ye Yoruba iru nnkan ti won nso.

Ni ile Yoruba asiko ti orun ba mu, akii sope ile n'joni lese ama n'so wipe ile tutu. Yoruba gbagbo wipe taba ni ile gbona awon nnkan wa to ba ategun sise, awon bi igbonna; koda toorun ba mu, won ki fe ki omode sufe, wani to ba sufe awon anjonu wa to rin ninu oorun to le fa ita igbona to ma yo lara omo.

Ni ipari taba tun ni eniyan sun ninu kristiani ni ama saba lo eleyi fun, musulumi ole ku ki won sun ninu oluwa, amo tabi ni lagbaja sun ninu oluwa a o tun ni lati bere pe iru elesin wo ni eni naa. Awon kristieni lo ma n' lo iru adape bayi, eniti ko mo olorun, wa ko so wipe lagbaja lo tabi won ti pe lo si ile. Iru akoko ti Yoruba maa n' lo awo adape wonyi ni yii.

Ni ibi ni a o ti duro

**Researcher:** Eseun gan sir

**Informant:** Eseun ekabo

## TRANSLATION

**Researcher:** Good morning sir

**Informant:** Good morning, hope we woke up well

**Researcher:** we thank God sir

**Researcher:** please sir I will like to know your name

**Informant:** My name is Ebenezer Edun

**Researcher:** From what state sir?

**Informant:** from Abeokuta in Ogun State

**Researcher:** thank you sir

**Informant:** Don't mention it

**Researcher:** daddy please i am working on some words in Yoruba language, called euphemisms, I will like you to share with me your knowledge about them and what time or context they can be used in Yoruba language.

**Informant:** well... we have Yoruba as a language itself and we also have euphemisms. We can see that we have what is called proverbs, Yoruba says 'if a word is missing, it is proverbs we employ to find it', and aside this there are euphemisms. Just like ehen... when one is dead, there is a particular way we euphemise it that we wouldn't say directly what has happened. This period when it is said that "the man has eaten up the dust," we could say this kind of man is no more or we could say such person's head isn't right or is acting strange. Thus one could make the statement 'see this man is eating up the dust' that is it about this. When we move further we will see that there are some certain ailments or sicknesses common in our nation, part of these is the 'disease that has no cure' we can see that one can contract it by having mutual dealings (sex) with a woman, even when we have a hand shake we might not contract the disease, but once there is blood contact...so instead of saying 'AIDS' we could say 'aahh this person has contracted the disease that has no cure.' Then another one is ... if we say someone has become a dozer in Yoruba land , such euphemism is usually used for one who is dead such that ; when those who are Yorubas gets to hear this , they will have understood that this person is dead. We can see that sometimes when the Yorubas are speaking they will say that one should not refer to a dog as a monkey that when one dies we should say directly that such is dead and not beat around the bush.

When it is also said that, 'it is God who gives and takes', it is also part of euphemisms. This is used in a situation where a woman who is pregnant could not deliver the child herself such that they had do a work on her (caesarean section), and by the time the child was brought out he was already dead and the mother is alive. But in a situation where the mother isn't alive but the child is, this euphemistic expression cannot be used. It is also used for a Christian who has been bereaved.

In addition when one is eating, possibly one of his friends came around or one of his neighbours tries to send him on an errand, it could be said that ‘so...so please help in buying this’ and he replied by saying that “He is eating the king or on top of the king”. Once this is said in Yoruba language, they would know that such person is eating and does not to stand up at the time he is eating. In the same vein, when we say ‘the pap seller or so...so has gone to heaven where there is no return’. This means that such person is dead and cannot be seen because heaven is a place of no return.

Another which is also a euphemism is when a child ... you know as Christians, the bible says we should train our children so they would give us rest. May be we sent a child on an errand and he didn’t do it well or he didn’t do the work the way we want it done, but because we are Christians and we know that there is power in the tongue, thus rather to curse that child or say something negative, we could say ‘your head is good on your neck’. When this is said, such child already knows that he has done something bad, but the mother does not want to say something negative to him. As we know there are different children, thus when we say ‘a child has eaten the lungs’ this is yet another euphemism which could be employed based on the fact that the child acts gullible, like someone not too smart. When this is said to such child, he will know there is a need to change

Furthermore, part of euphemism is when it is said that ‘one has changed position’. As Christians if we do not want to break the news about someone’s death by mere looking at the environment and mood of the people, sometimes it could be during prayers that it would just be mentioned that no one should sorrow and we should not morn like the unwise, while saying this, they could say directly that the person has changed position. This is because there are different kinds of people; some may not be able to bear the news that they would just faint immediately, so in the Yoruba society euphemisms like ‘change position’ is usually employed to break news about death. Another form of euphemism is also saying that ‘it is the water that spilled, the calabash is still intact’ as I said earlier this could also be employed as a condolence euphemism to a woman who was delivered of a baby, but ended up losing the child. The water is the child while the mother is the calabash. Thus, the euphemism is used when the mother is alive. When such euphemism is used the people would have understood that it is the child who has died but the mother is still alive.

Moreover, there is no way we can say a king is dead in Yoruba land, it is usually said that ‘the king has entered into the ceiling’ has transcended. We don’t say he is dead; wherever it is mentioned that the king is dead people will quickly shut the person down that ‘shut your mouth the king isn’t dead, he’s only transcended.’ It is also another euphemism to say ‘one is given an incision behind his head’ this refer to bringing someone back to his right senses or is used to call someone’s attention when he is treading the wrong path . It could be said that ‘so...so, you better give your child an incision on the back of his head’. When this is said the Yorùbas around would have understood what is meant. Also in Yoruba land when it is hot it is a taboo to say the ground is hot and hurting the legs, but euphemisms such as cold is usually employed.

Because it is believed that when we say the ground is hot there are certain spirits that works with the wind which are negative, part of this is small pox. Thus, children are always rebuked not to whistle during the day because it is believed that when they whistle they could evoke the spirits of bush babies who works with the sun and could cause small pox to the child.

Finally, if we say one has gone to sleep with the lord, this is usually used for Christians, a Muslim or a traditionalists can't die and it will be said that such is resting with the lord, it could just be said that such as gone to heaven, so with the use of this euphemism, one would be able to know the religion of the deceased. These are the various euphemisms usually used in the Yoruba society and the likely periods or context within which they could be used.

## INTERVIEW 2

### A semi structured interview with Mr Ojediran on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2015

**Researcher:** Good afternoon sir.

**Informant:** Good afternoon

**Researcher:** I will like to know your name, age and your state of origin

**Informant:** I am Ojediran, Lawrence Sunday, I will be 69 by October and I am from Gbongan in Osun State

**Researcher:** thank you sir

**Informant:** you are welcome.

**Researcher:** sir, I am on a research on the use of euphemisms in Yoruba language. They are mild words used to replace unpleasant or offensive words in a language.

**Informant:** yes

**Researcher:** Sir does such words exist in Yoruba language?

**Informant:** such words can't cease to exist in Yoruba language, because there are certain words that cannot just be discussed or talk about anyhow especially when in public, you being a Yoruba girl who is of age, you are aware that it is difficult for a Yoruba person to talk freely in public about some parts of the body especially that of male and female that are hidden; instead such person says 'why not put on your trouser or cover up your body or chest with a cloth'. Here, the word 'body' is not the right word intended by the speaker, but the male and female genitals, especially if the addressee is a girl who already has breasts, instead of saying 'why are you revealing your breast' the word chest is used as substitute for breast. Such words are mostly used as substitute when children are around, who could pick up such words and begin to use it in public.

**Researcher:** thank you sir

**Informant:** you are welcome

**Researcher:** sir is it possible to identify the use of euphemisms in people's conversations?

**Informant:** if one is a true indigene of Yoruba, it is possible, in that as one grows in the society one grows with the knowledge of it.

**Researcher:** which means it is possible to identify them?

**Informant:** yes it is possible, but the younger ones might not be able to, because age and the level of exposure help one to know so much of it.

**Researcher:** daddy, how can we identify the use of these euphemisms?

**Informant:** the beauty of euphemism lies in the fact that it is often use for special effects in language.

**Researcher:** what are the reasons for its use?

**Informant:** there is no language in the world that has no words used to hide certain things, thus they are used as substitute for certain vulgar, harsh or offensive words.

**Researcher:** ok thank you sir. When do people employ the use of euphemisms?

**Informant:** there isn't a time in which euphemism is not used in Yoruba language; it is used most times in the house, during family meetings especially when there's a rift. For example: your husband said you didn't allow him to neither touch nor come close to you, said by the family head. The word 'touch and being close' here has a deeper meaning than these, they are just euphemisms for the word sex.

**Researcher:** thank you sir.

**Researcher:** To what category of people do we make use of euphemisms?

**Informant:** To people who have the understanding of the language and the use of euphemism, it is not just used with anybody, and we can't say because an Igbo man or Hausa man speaks Yoruba then, he should understand euphemisms in Yoruba language. It is spoken to those with great mastery of the language.

**Researcher:** are they used in the home and in hospitals?

**Informant:** yes, just like the word small pox, they call it 'olode' that is one who owns the environment, because where ever such is, it is not expected that children and adults come close, it makes people stay indoors, that's why it is said that it owns the environment. Also, may God not make us mad.

**Researcher:** amen

**Informant:** instead of saying directly that someone is mad, they could say that his act isn't like that of a normal person.

**Researcher:** so do we use it in the home?

**Informant:** there is virtually no Yoruba home where euphemism is not been used sometimes in conversations. In the Yoruba society, hardly will you see anyone who goes to buy salt or needle early in the morning, if such is done most people will say they don't have, instead it is expected to say you want to buy 'soup ingredient or sea' for salt. This is often used in the home

**Researcher:** hum...., so does the use of euphemism have anything to do with age or the relationship between people.

**Informant:** yes, age has so much to do with the use of euphemism, because the way I as an elderly person will talk is quite different from the way you younger ones will; the words I will present

in a mild way, you might not, even when an elderly person wants to insult or caution a child he/she still says it in a polite manner.

**Researcher:** thank you sir

**Informant:** you are welcome

**Researcher:** finally sir, is it possible for you to remember a number of these euphemisms

**Informant:** humm... I have mentioned some while I was talking

**Researcher:** yes sir

**Informant:** but if you wouldn't need it today, I will write down some for you, which you will have to come back to get from me.

**Researcher:** that's really good sir.... Thank you so much.

**Informant:** you are welcome dear... thank God.

### **INTERVIEW 3**

**This is a semi structured interview with Dr. Titilayo Ojo on 2<sup>nd</sup> January, 2016.**

**Researcher:** Mummy good afternoon

**Informant:** good afternoon dear

**Researcher:** mummy please I will like to know your name and where you work

**Informant:** I am Dr. Esther, Titilayo Ojo. I work here in the University of Lagos, Department of Linguistics, African and Asian studies.

**Researcher:** thank you ma

**Informant:** welcome

**Researcher:** Mummy, am working on euphemisms in Yoruba language, they call it 'adape oro' in Yoruba.

**Informant:** yes! It is called 'adape oro'.

**Researcher:** it was when I got here (Yoruba department) I got to know it is also called 'adape oro' I have always known it to be 'afiyo pa oro' (rubbing words with salt).

**Informant:** ah no it is also called 'Adape oro'

**Researcher:** ok thank you ma.

**Researcher:** ma I will want to hear from you if such words exist in Yoruba language

**Informant:** ah... it does, very well... we have so many of them in Yoruba language as the Yorùbas do not just say things anyhow, because they are intelligent people with so much wisdom; they do not just talk anyhow, but weigh their words before they are being uttered, thus, in order to reduce whatsoever negative effects some words could have on the hearer, they substitute them with softer and milder words.

**Researcher:** hummm... thank you ma.

**Researcher:** ma, is it possible to identify euphemisms in conversations?

**Informant:** in conversations.... Yes it is possible.

**Researcher:** so what are the reasons for the use of euphemisms in Yoruba language?

**Informant:** the reasons for the use of euphemisms are many, but I will mention just two

**Researcher:** ok ma

**Informant:** The first is that, they are used to teach morals especially to the children of this age , such that when these euphemisms are used , it is also been explained to them what it means . Majorly it is used based on the fact that the Yorùbas do not like to say things the way they are all the time, so as not to be harsh, but mild.

**Researcher:** ma, so when do we make use of them in Yoruba language?

**Informant:** as I have said earlier, they are used most times to teach moral lessons, as they are coded ways to saying something.

**Researcher:** ma, do you have an idea if it is been used in the palace?

**Informant:** ahhh... very well, especially if you read this book by Adebayo Faleti, titled Bashorun Gaa, sorry I don't have mine here now, there is an extensive use of Yoruba euphemisms in the book especially, when a young girl was being taught about the things that pertains to the palace.

**Researcher:** humm

**Informant:** there you will find euphemistic expressions like 'iya mopoo and oju awe obinrin' (moopo's mother and the female's body opening) used as substitutes for vaginal.

**Researcher:** oh they call it that too

**Informant:** yes, you know they wouldn't want to say the word 'obo' (vaginal) in public.

**Researcher:** yes that's true.

**Researcher:** so, ma, to what categories of people do we use euphemisms?

**Informant:** I said earlier on, that the children of this present age do not know these euphemisms, thus, it is used in the home by parents to teach their children. For example; in the house, instead of saying one is a thief, a milder word will be used as substitute "alafowora" (one who's hands makes things disappear or a pilfer)

**Researcher:** humm

**Informant:** you can see from what happened just now, when I said that my basket has been stolen, and he said it's only been tapped

**Researcher:** (laughing)...

**Informant:** it wasn't stolen; it was tapped that's euphemism.

**Researcher:** humm ... thank you ma

**Informant:** for instance; words like Acquired immune deficiency syndrome (Aids), if these words are to be explained in their full details, the meaning will be so great and fearful, such that as the people get to hear that they have contracted such disease, they will begin to die.

**Researcher:** humm... that's quite true

**Informant:** so instead words like 'aarun ko gbogun' (a disease that has no cure) is used as substitute which has to an extent reduced the dreadful word Aids.

**Researcher:** thank you ma. Ma, is it correct to say that the use of euphemism highly depends on age or the relationship that exist between interlocutors?

**Informant:** you mean the use of euphemisms?

**Researcher:** yes ma

**Informant:** yes to a large extent it does. Just like you, you are just like a child to me.

**Researcher:** I am a child to you ma.

**Informant:** you as a child might not know how well to present some issues as I will as an older person. It is an elderly person who knows that certain words could sound too harsh when it is used directly, thus I as an elderly person will say such words in a coded manner with the use of euphemism, but a child will say it directly.

**Researcher:** that true

**Informant:** A child will say “he is a thief, he stole it”, but an elderly person will look for a milder word as substitutes.

**Researcher:** thank you ma

**Informant:** hope I have been helpful

**Researcher:** ahh... very well ma

**Informant:** had it been you had informed me before now, I would have prepared well for you

**Researcher:** mummy with these you have really tried, thank you ma.

**Researcher:** but mummy can you still remember more euphemisms aside all those ones you have given earlier.

**Informant:** only if you can give me some time to check them up for you.

**Researcher:** it's alright ma, thank you so much ma.



## **APPENDIX C**

### **Downloaded minijojo programmes on African Independent Television (A.I.T) from Youtube.com**

Minijojo - 16.04.2017

Minijojo - 12.03.2017

Minijojo - 12. 02.2017

Minijojo – 09.10. 2016

Minijojo - 09. 04. 2017

## Appendix D

### A Compilation of Yoruba Euphemisms

#### Death Euphemisms

1. So ile je  
eat the dust
2. dagbere fun aye  
bid the world good bye
3. Pa ipo da  
changed position
4. je olorun ni ipe  
yield to God's call
5. oloogbe  
a dozer
6. di erupe  
become dust
7. teri gba aso  
bury the head in a cloth
8. fi ile se aso bora  
used the ground as a covering cloth
9. gbe emi mi  
give up the ghost
10. rorun are mabo  
has gone to a heaven, where there is no returning
11. fun dipo  
squeezed his buttocks
12. sun ninu oluwa  
have slept in the lord
13. se alaisi  
is no more
14. dake  
is quiet
15. rin irin ajo  
has gone on a journey
16. waja  
has entered into the ceiling
17. ile baja  
the land is ruined
18. ile segi  
the ground has split up
19. opo ye  
the pillar has fallen
20. erin wo  
the elephant has fallen
21. fi owo okun le le  
has dropped the rope
22. re wale asa  
has joined the ancestors

#### 2. Insult euphemisms

23. ja ifun iya je  
have eaten the mother's lungs
24. afofun gbe mu  
has swallowed the lungs
25. ori e daa lorun e  
your head is good on your neck
26. olorire omo  
fortunate child

#### 3. Pregnancy Euphemisms

27. feraku  
have blown/ fan the body to remain
28. alabrameji  
one with two bodies
29. iya ibeji  
mother of twins
30. je isu orisa  
have eaten the god's yam
31. gbe aayan mi  
have swallowed croakroach
32. bi omo

- have defecated (to have been delivered of a baby)
33. be  
burst (used for goats when they are delivered of their babies)
34. onibisi  
one who will have more babies (used to address the barren)

#### 4. Sex euphemisms

35. ba sun  
sleep with
36. ise ku ise  
inappropriate actions
37. ibalopo  
relate with
38. ajosepo  
mutual dealings
39. mo  
to know

#### 5. Social euphemisms

*Euphemisms for prostitutes*

40. gbele pawo  
one who makes money by staying at home
41. oni inabi  
promiscuous person
42. oni se ku se  
one who does inappropriate things
43. Animashaaun  
a charitable person
44. oni ise ale  
night worker  
*Euphemisms for thieves*
45. alafowora  
one whose hands makes things disappear (thief)

46. fewo  
a pilfer
47. gbewiri  
one who steals without being caught
48. alo koloun kigbe  
one whose departure makes the owner of the goods cry
49. alonilowogba  
those who twists people's hands in getting their things
50. Ojawe ile oni ile bo tire mole  
one who cuts leaves from another man's house but covers his own

#### 6. Common Euphemisms

51. owo kuduru (Bribe Euphemisms)  
short hands  
*Euphemisms used for one who is in trouble*
52. Ru igi oyin  
carried the honey tree
53. ko eran Ajala  
steal Ajala's meat  
*Euphemisms used when one is being deceived*
54. di ibon fun eniyan  
perform magic
55. fi ọmọ'ori igbá kan bọkan ninu  
use a different calabash cover for another  
*Euphemism used for one who has refused apologies*
56. fi aake ko ori  
entangle the head with an axe
57. tu ito fufun soke fi oju gba

spit up and received it with  
the eye

*Euphemism use to express  
impertinent or rude behaviour*

58. wo agba ni imu

enter an elder's nose

*Euphemism used when a secret  
is exposed*

59. akara tu sepo

the bean cake has busted into  
the oil

*Euphemism used for one who is  
stagnant*

60. edun arinle

butterfly who walks on the  
ground

*Euphemism used for one who is  
presumptuous*

61. gbe ebo koja orita

carried the prepared sacrifice  
beyond where it is meant to  
be placed

62. gun igi re koja ewe

climbed the tree beyond the  
leaves

*Euphemisms used in the home  
for salt*

63. osa

sea

64. isebe

soup in ingredient

*Euphemisms used when one is  
eating*

65. wa lori oba

on top of the king

*Euphemism used for one who is  
asleep*

66. reju

rest the eye

*Euphemism used for one who is  
fat*

67. tinrin

slim

68. fuye

light

*Euphemism used for the ground  
when hot*

69. tutu

cold

*Euphemism used to give  
warnings*

70. sin gbera ipako

circumcision of the head

*Euphemism used to apologize*

71. ra owo ebe

rub hands of apologies

*Euphemisms used for  
menstruation*

72. alejo

visitor

73. epo

palm oil

*Euphemisms for one who is mad*

74. eniti eje ta si lopolu

one whose blood has spilled into  
his brain

75. alaarun opolu

sickness of the head

## **7. Euphemisms for impotence**

76. akura

one whose body is dead

77. eshin inu iwe

a horse in a book

78. eniti atan re ko gbe pon

one whose sperm has lost its  
strength

79. febrari

february

## 8. Condolence euphemisms

*Euphemisms used to console one who has lost some one so dear*

80. adupe fun igbe aye dara daara

thank God for a life well spent

81. nigbogbo ona ka sa madupe  
in all situations we should give thanks

82. olorun ni fi fun ni ti si gba pada

it is God who gives and takes

83. ojo ajina si ara  
the day shall be far from the other

84. ki olorun fun yin okun lati gba

may the lord grant you fortitude to bear the loss

*Euphemisms used to console one who has lost his house and property to fire*

85. awodi oku ewu o  
hawk thank God for your safety

86. oluwa afi ofo ra emi  
the will purchase the lives with the losses

*Euphemism used to console still born (abiku) parents*

87. Olorun ko ni se lofo  
the lord will not make it a loss

88. omi lo danu agbe ofo  
it is the water that spills, the calabash is not broken

*Euphemisms used to console parents who*

89. eku bi olorun bi ti wi

kudos to you for accepting the will of God

## 9. Body parts Euphemisms

*Euphemisms for the male genital (penis)*

90. kokoro  
insect

91. nnkan omo okunrin  
male thing

92. ekata itan  
the third thigh

93. kinni  
some thing

*Euphemisms used for the female genital (virgina)*

94. ohun abo  
the female thing

95. iya moopo  
moopo's mother

96. odo abe, tabi oju ara  
body's opening

97. ele  
damsel

*Euphemism for breast*

98. aya  
chest

## 10. Sickness and disease and euphemisms

99. Baba (small pox)  
father

100. Olode small pox (one who owns the town)

101. sisunu (diarrhea)  
excreting the stomach

*Euphemisms for HIV/AIDS*

102. kokoro Eedi  
the insect called Aids

103. Aarun ko gbo oogun  
the disease that has no cure

104. Jedi jedi (hemorrhoid)

buttocks eater

105. oko duro o gbakan re

(leukorrhea)

husband, take back your  
thing.

