

THE CONCEPT OF COVER AND COVER TERMS IN EWE

Emmanuel Dogbey
Department of Ewe Education
University of Education, Winneba
edogbey@uew.edu.gh

Abstract

This paper discusses covering processes and terms expressing 'to cover' in their basic and extended senses in Ewe. Ewe is a Kwa (Niger-Congo) language of West Africa. It belongs to the Gbe language cluster, spoken largely in parts of the Republic of Ghana, Togo, Benin, and Nigeria. The paper demonstrates that covering is a component of life sustenance activities, universally practiced across cultures and languages. Just like in Ewe, languages have forms for expressing covering forms. Studies on life sustenance activities identify air, food, and shelter/clothing as key components for survival. Literature establishes that components, elements, or aspects of life-sustaining activities shape cultural elements. Discussions on meaning concepts and relations about cover and covering in Ewe reveal the presence of precise verbs establishing and expressing the meanings in different ways. Analysing and interpreting relational properties and processes of objects define the choice of words for expressing covering and degrees of coverage. Data was elicited from a purposive sample of 20 adult native-speaker consultants. The findings reveal that the properties of materials used, the objects and parts involved, the process of covering, and the extent of coverage have a meaning map regarding the terms in the constructions that portray the concept of cover in Ewe. Also, extensions and metaphorical expressions of 'cover' project some dialectal and context-based motivations. It argues that for the concept of cover to be expressed, it should involve one or more objects, usually different, and their defined parts. Still, they must have direct contact or proximity. The study posits that meaning equivalences differ but remain fixed based on the types or nature of objects, the parts, the processes and contexts of usage, and interpretations within a domain.

Keywords: cover, wear, life sustenance, conceal, Ewe, metaphorical

Totoɔeme

Nunlɔɔi sia dzro nutsyɔtsyɔ nu, nutsyɔtsyɔ nu fe mɔnuwo kple nya siwo wotsɔna fiaa ale si 'nàtsyɔ nu' nanee le gomesese gbadza kple gomesese deto fe susuwo nu le Euegbe me la me. Euegbe nye Kwa (Niger – Congo) gbeɔgbɔɔbɔ siwo le Yetodofo Afrika la dometo ɔɔka. Enye Gbe fe gbeɔgbɔɔbɔa fofuwo dometo ɔɔka si wodon koŋ le Ghana, Togo, Benin kple Nigeria dukɔa fe nuto aɔewo me. Nunlɔɔi sia dee fia be 'nutsyɔtsyɔ nu' nye nu siwo léa miáfe agbe ɔɔ te la dometo ɔɔka. Wowɔa enuti dɔ le dukɔwo kple gbeɔgbɔɔbɔ vovovowo me. Abe ale si wòle le Euegbe mee ene la, gbeɔgbɔɔbɔ vovovowo há tsɔa nya vovovowo tsɔ ɔɔka nutsyɔtsyɔ nu fe nɔnɔme vovovowo fiana. Nulédziwo tso nu siwo léa miáfe agbe ɔɔ te nu la de dzesi ya, nuduɔu kple nutsyɔtsyɔ nu abe nu siwo nana be wotsia agbe la fe soti vevi aɔewo ene. Nugɔmekukuwo ɔɔe anyi be nu siwo katá léa miáfe agbe ɔɔ te la fe wɔna me nuwo, nu siwo tu wo ɔɔ kple wofe nɔnɔmewo trɔa asi le miáfe dekonu me nuwo fe nɔnɔmewo nu. Numedzodzo tso gomesese, susu kple kadodo siwo le nutsyɔtsyɔ nu kple nutsyɔtsyɔ nu fe mɔnuwo nu le Euegbe me la dee fia be dɔwɔnya tɔxe aɔewo li koŋ, siwo ɔɔka kple nutsyɔtsyɔ nu kple nutsyɔtsyɔ nu fe mɔnu vovowo dzi heɔɔa wofe gomesesewo fiana wotɔxewotewo le mɔ vovovowo nu. Numedzodzo kple numedɔɔɔ tso dzesidenu si ɔɔ mɔ ɔɔ nuwo fe kadodo aɔe me nɔnɔ nu kple wo nɔnɔ ɔɔnuwo alo mɔnuwo dea dzesi nya aɔewo tiatia koŋ ɔɔ nutsyɔtsyɔ nu fomevi aɔe ɔɔ, ɔɔ dee afia kple kekemedofo si le nutsyɔtsyɔ nu la si nu. Nugɔmekukua fe nutsotsoxɔxɔwo tso Euegbeɔgbɔɔbɔa dzɔleafea akuakua blaeye siwo nugɔmɔkula tia de eya nɔnɔ fe susu nu la gbɔ. Nutsotsoawo metsonuwo dee fia be nɔnɔme si le nu siwo kpɔ gome le nutsyɔtsyɔ nu wɔna la me si, nu fomevi siwo dome nutsyɔtsyɔ nu la yi edzi le, nɔnɔme siwo me nutsyɔtsyɔ nu la zɔ ɔɔ, kpekpeme si le nutsyɔtsyɔ nu wɔna la si la, hea gomesese fe sɔsɔ, ɔɔ nu nu fiana ɔɔ nya fomevi siwo dze le nutsyɔtsyɔ nu ɔɔ dee afia le Euegbe me la fe nya alo nyagbewo tutuɔ me. Tsɔ kpe ɔɔ enu la, nutomegbeɔgbɔɔbɔwo alo gbetagbewo kple yeɔyi si me woawɔ nya aɔe nɔnɔ dɔ la doa fu nyazámɔnuwo kple gbedanɔnuwo nɔnɔ dɔwɔwɔ le nutsyɔtsyɔ nu ɔɔ dee afia me. Nugɔmekuku la metsonuwo dee fia be hafi woadɔ nutsyɔtsyɔ nu fe nɔnɔme aɔe afia la, nu siwo nu wòaku ɔɔ la nyea nu ɔɔka alo wu nenema, nu ɔɔkangbewo alo nu vovovowo zi geɔɔ kple wofe akpa vovovo siwo kpɔ gome le nutsyɔtsyɔ nu wɔna la me. Ke há la, edze be woaka wo nɔewo nu alo ate ɔɔ wo nɔewo nu ɔɔ dometsotso aɔe nu. Nugɔmekuku la ɔɔe anyi be gomesese fe ɔɔkanyenyewo toa vovo henyee nu tɔxe nɔɔokuisiwo, ku ɔɔ nu fomevi siwo le nutsyɔtsyɔ nu la wɔna la wɔm, nuawo fe ha vovovowo, wofe nɔnɔmewo, wofe akpa siwo kpɔ gome le nutsyɔtsyɔ nu la me, mɔnu alo aɔanɔ siwo de megbe na wo la nɔnɔ dɔwɔwɔ le yeɔyi aɔe me kple gomesese si wɔɔena fiana le wozáyiwo la nu.

Nya tɔxewo: tsyɔ, do, agbe lelé ɔɔ te, ɔɔla, Eue, nusɔnu

1. Introduction

This paper explores the basic and extended meanings of 'to cover' and its processes in Ewe. Covering a body and other things is a universal activity that plays a fundamental life-sustaining role. Such roles are explicitly communicated across languages through the employment of varied linguistic structures. These linguistic structures usually expatiate cultural and linguistic independence, regarding language usage. Expressions on covering cover simple and metaphorical or extended aspects of thought and life in the literature and linguistics of a people.

Covering a thing, apart from signifying protecting, decorating, and concealing something, is also used to refer to people covering others or covering up for others. It refers to hiding bad acts or consciously downplaying aspects of a person's bad behaviors in order to hide their identity or help them escape punishment or forms of disgrace (Molimo, 2021: 28, 49, 81). Covering a body has biological, physical, and spiritual aspects and implications; however, the idea of shielding an object for a purpose is centralised in all forms of cover expression for a decentralised meaning (Luktus 2017: 69). She asserts that meaning decentralisation usually births varied expressions contextually. The contextualization of meaning is what Boltz (2019:6,47, Williams & Moulton 2023:9) refer to as meaning for a purpose, also referred to as meaning for a choice (Baxkabok, 2010: 1, 3, 5, 19), for an intention (Sporn 2023, 7, 8). We can say that this idea of meaning for a purpose, choice or for an intention and others could be supported by various contributions and developments, just to elicit the idea. This paper in a similar way, explores several constructions that present different meaning bases, and forms of expressing 'to cover' in Ewe

2. Literature Review

Covering refers to the act of covering or shielding an object, which means placing something in its way or face or spreading something over it to protect or conceal it. In the views of Anakwa (2018:2, 6-7), a covering can be an object or substance that goes over or on top of something. She gave an example of how a space, object or ground could be covered with snow, straw, or any material that protects it from being exposed or visible. Tomason (2022:114-115, 125) says, covering is a natural thing that occurs among the living and non-living components of the universe. He said the clouds cover the sky or even the sun for a purpose. The land is covered with grasses, trees, rivers, mountains, and others. All these covering forms are for a given purpose. Extensive studies on covering involve human dressing; textiles and leather products for aesthetic purposes (Hans 2016:28-29, 34). There are styles and ways of making clothes to cover our bodies, and such have specific names. In the views of Anakwa (2018:12, 16, 18) and Baxkabok (2010:19-21, Williams & Moulton, 2023:27-33), the part of a body being covered and the manner of the clothing (covering) or its style (manner) have specific terms, considering factors such as the occasion, gender, status among others.

Covering in terms of human relations further falls into the norms of a group's activities or principles, which can be observed under four parameters: association, appearance, advocacy, and affiliation. The concept of covering can be extended to other disciplines such as law (being protected by the law), insurance (having insurance cover), and politics (immunity under a law), among others. All the afore convergences on covering agree with the assertion of Croft and Cruse (2004:11, 12) that 'to cover' is a habitual activity that is inevitable in all daily activities of man, and is described or interpreted in varied ways. It is also one of the key pillars of life sustenance on earth; covering flora and fauna. Nevertheless, studies on terminologies and expressions associated with covering and its processes in Ewe are found to be negligible in the academic discourse; a grey area worth exploring to fill the lacuna. This study, therefore, aims at bringing out expressions surrounding 'to cover', covering forms, manner of covering, and covering processes in Ewe. This will bring out the various meanings, roles, contexts, and other dispensations surrounding 'to cover'; one of the inevitable life-sustenance activities.

Studies on life-sustenance activities identify food, shelter/clothing (covering), and air as crucial for human existence and protection (Orange, 2023; Sporn, 2023). This paper explores and discusses expressions that elicit the concept of 'cover or to cover' in Ewe. On the surface, 'to cover' is generally expressed as '**tsyɔ**' or '**bu tsyɔ**' or '**bu nane dzi**' in Ewe. 'To cover' has relational meanings such as to shelter, clothe, close, conceal, hide, among others. In Ewe, the concept of covering is descriptive, signifying varied processes of 'sheltering' an object with another object, whether in part or completely, and considering their marked proximity of a defined contact or

conceal. One also focuses on identifying the objects' relationship and the defined words that elicit their description or interpretation of cover relation.

Although descriptions of cover terms are neither unknown nor necessarily rare, their properties have never been previously explored in any extent in detail in Ewe as far as the literature explored for supporting this study is concerned. Various terms are used to express covering and its forms diversely in Ewe. Such expressions occupy various parts of speech depending on the context and usage. Generally, studies on cover terms refer to them as a part of speech that functions as a verb (Langacker, 2000:13). They portray the concept of concealing something by obstructing the view of it, either partly or in whole. Covering also protects objects from harm and other misfortunes. Covering makes things look attractive or elegant and with a defined look, shape, or form. It also sensitises us to explore acts and manners covering relationships between things and even crossing spiritual, biological, physical, and metaphorical domains or realms of reference (Newman, 2002a). Without covering, life will be in danger in varied ways since covering is one of life-sustaining activities (Langacker, 2000:13; Langacker, 1991:7; Levinson, 1994:22; Newman, 2002a:37; Williams and Moulton 2023: 6, 17, 23).

Levinson (1994:6) says, language is independent and unique in expressing thoughts surrounding various activities and representations. He posits that communicating a thought is context-based and language-dependent; hence, a given concept can be expressed in varied ways across languages and contexts to mean either the same thing or a different one. In his view, meaning derivations, meaning bases, and meaning functions are key supporting pillars for the usefulness of every expressive form and word. Generally, language is an indispensable factor in human interaction and communication, intended for a given meaning derivation. It serves as a vehicle that conveys messages regarding people's way of life, culture, and worldview through verbal and non-verbal dispensations. Additionally, words of various languages play crucial roles in sentences, but only in contexts and usage and participant backgrounds can the true classes and functions of a word be defined and or be conveyed (Pye et al., 1996: 60). In this regard, meaning is expressed in a variety of ways depending on several communicative factors; the context, background of participants, purpose of the communication and other intentions. Words used to express covering also function under the influence of the factors of context, the background of participants, the purpose of the communication and intentions, and others, which this study will bring out.

According to Pye, Loeb, and Pao (1996:63), word forms, meanings, and concepts of word referents and roles are different things under linguistic and cultural consideration of an expression. While word meaning is established within a linguistic system (semantic fields, semantic contrasts, and syntactic properties of words), they are not directly tied to referents. We, however, always tie words to real-life referents through our theories of how to identify the referent for words; considering linguistic and cultural dimensions; both come into play concurrently though exhibit differences due to dialectal and biological nuances as well as background of participants in the speech act. Challenges from linguistic and cultural consideration in the use of words or expression invite focusing on contexts of expressions as well as seeking further clarifications to alleviate the meaning contemplations among others. 'Covering' or 'to cover' is not an exception under these considerations. It is also found that the benefits surrounding the usage of a word form, births array of its forms, diversity of usage across contexts of application, and performance of prolific functions. Understanding covering terms, processes, and forms is also part of the linguistic competence and cultural literacy of a people; for language forms have metaphorical, relational, and other meaning extensions that enrich as well as aid effective communication. Effective communication is a meaning-dependent activity; hence, the use of any linguistic form is an engagement with strong relational parameters and entanglements that aid understanding, and manifest across the human conceptual environment, due to effects of cultural and social experiences on linguistic and semiotic systems of

meaning-making among a people (Kövecses, 1986:32, 1990:18, 1991:12; Agyekum, 2018; Sherris and Adami, 2019:16,33).

Sherris and Adami (2019:15,16,28,52) say, interests, respects, and values attached to objects, principles, and terminologies by a person or a people are based on perspectives of usefulness, meanings from frequency of usage, and the functions of those items in their everyday life and others. It is also based on experiential realities, motivations, and explanations surrounding a linguistic form or phenomenon under consideration. One can say that the frequency of usage of a linguistic form in varied contexts enhances the generation of varied terms for explaining the array of concepts or new meanings emanating from the usage. The frequency of usage invokes the sense of usefulness hence the dependency.

Furthermore, cover expressions portray a relationship between things. Describing, interpreting, or explaining the relationship between entities considers manner, position, orientation, distance, among others about the components involved. Molimo (2021:15) says covering and its processes sometimes present synchronic, diachronic, and asynchronous familiarities and features between the entities involved. In this study, the relation concerning how an object is covered (manner), the processes, the materials and objects involved, the nature of the materials and qualities or features of the objects and materials, proximity, among others are considered. These considerations are closely tied to native speakers' actions and ways of life (Orange, 2023:41; Sporn, 2023:9; Jackson, 2021:21) which also define and control speakers' word choices and usages across contexts for a purpose.

3. Methodology

The data reported in this paper comes from a variety of sources collected during the year 2023 and 2024 Departmental Week Celebrations of the Department of Ewe Education and the year 2023 Culture Week Celebration of the Faculty of Ghanaian Languages Education, all in the University of Education, Winneba in Ghana. The dressing forms of selected students who prepared and exhibited varieties of Ewe gastronomy, as well as the way the foods and drinks were dressed at the exhibition events, were collected and described. The researcher engaged the selected respondents in discussing the various dressing forms of people and the food items in relation to covering. The description and interpretation of the covering forms in the discussion consider the nature of materials involved, the manner of covering, and the process of covering, among others. The descriptions reveal the elicited words used to express the various ways of covering a body. This interactive discourse text mechanism enables a natural discourse data source, consisting of the observation of speakers talking about or describing the actual covering relationship between objects.

The selected respondents for the discussion were sampled purposively; twenty (20) respondents, made up of three (3) lecturers, two (2) retired lecturers, five (5) postgraduate students, and ten (10) undergraduate students in the Department of Ewe Education were selected as consultants for the study. These participants were drawn from the three major dialect zones of Ewe speakers in Ghana viz, Coastal, Inland (Evedome), and Riverine (Tongu) which has Central and Northern Tongu dialects (see, Ameka, 1991; Ameka, 2007; Ameka, 2008; Ameka & Levinson, 2007 and Kpoglu, 2019).

The way some of the items were grown and processed was also described. Pictures and some recorded videos signifying varied forms of covering were also shown to the selected participants to describe. It aims to explore the notion of object relations concerning cover and the elicitation of its expression in Ewe. Each consultant described a set of stimuli in an individual session before participating in a group session, where the differences noted in the individual sessions were discussed to seek explanations for the variations.

Furthermore, these also help in finding that covering forms depend on the nature of the objects involved, the part of a body being used, the nature of the materials involved, the manner of covering, and the processes engaged in the covering event or scene as well as the degree of the coverage or covering among others. For instance, Figures 1, 3, 4 and 5 have demonstrated the use of wear. "Wearing or wrapping a piece

of cloth on a body is expressed using “**ta [tà]**” or “**gba [gbá]**” (mostly for women) whilst wearing a shirt, a pair of trousers or shorts, dress, gloves and footwear on a body part is expressed using “**do [dó]**”, and wrapping a material on an object is expressed using “**xatsa [xátsá]**” and “**bla [blá]**”. The following shows how these expressions are used in sentences.

- (1) **É dó àwù.**
3SG wear shirt/dress
'S/he wears a shirt/dress.'
- (2) **Ama tà àv̄.**
Ama wear cloth
'Ama wears clothes.'
- (3) **Wó xátsá àv̄ dé é nù (nùtí).**
3PL wrap cloth at 3SG exterior part/surface (of a body)
'They wrap a cloth around it/ they wrap it in a cloth.'

The data analysis presents varied forms of verbs that elicit cover expression.

4. Data presentation and analysis of covering concepts and their elicitations

Pantheons of scholars have found that it is understood that Ewe verbs are best analysed as constructional participants (Essegbey 1999; Ameka 2006:57; Adjei, 2012:111; Kpoglu 2019). Thus, meanings are not conveyed by verbs alone but are a conjoint effort between verbs and constructions. To emphasise that words in isolation are meaningless unless they are used in sentences to communicate meaning in a given context, pictures are also used in this paper to support the constructions conveying the concept of “to cover” or covering in Ewe.

4.1. Expressing complete cover in Ewe, using ‘**tsyɔ**’ [tʃjɔ]

In expressing how something is fully covered with a tiny or no part left, **tsyɔ** [tʃjɔ] is used as the verb together with other words to express the full coverage. In that form, the verb **tsyɔ** expresses the portrayal of a full covering of something as could be seen in Figure 1. Figure 1 Picture A expresses the covering of the face with hands; Picture B represents the covering of the body with a cloth leaving some small parts of the body and Picture C shows the total covering of an object with a tablecloth. The focus is always on the object being covered and the extent of its coverage by another object (material). We focus on the surfaces, parts or things covered viz face, body and food (thing). The hands cover the face, the cloth covers a larger portion of the girl’s body, and the tablecloth covers the things on the table entirely.

Figure 1: Forms of covering depicting manner



A

B

C

(Source: IMPIX Midea, 2023)

- (4) **Nyónúví** **lá** **tsyó** **àsí** **mò.** (Picture A)
 girl DET cover hand face
 ‘The girl covers her face with her hand.’
- (5) **Nyónúví** **lá** **tsyó** **àv̄.** (Picture B)
 girl DET cover cloth
 ‘The girl covered herself with a cloth.’
- (6) **Wó** **tsyó** **kplódzív̄** **nɛ.** (Picture C)
 3PL cover table.on.cloth 3SG
 ‘They cover it with a table cloth.’

Other expressions that could exhibit full covering include;

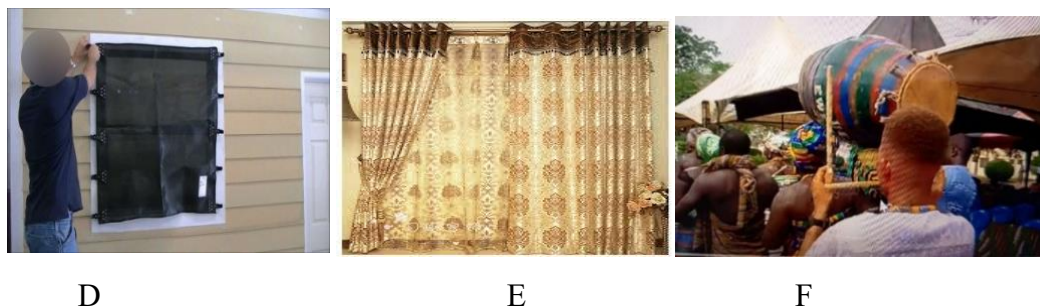
- (7) **Ámá** **tsyó** **kūsí** **kòkló** **lá.**
 Ama cover basket chicken DET
 ‘Ama covered the chicken with a basket’
 (thus, Ama put the fowl is under the basket)
- (8) **Ê** **tsyó** **àv̄** **tă.**
 3SG cover cloth head
 ‘S/he covered his/her head with cloth’

The use of **tsyó** seems applicable in most contexts where ‘to cover’ is expressed. Metaphorically, **tsyó** is used to express shame or shyness. The expression **Nju mekpea ame wotsyɔa asi mo o**, meaning, ‘shyness is not removed just by covering the face with hands’, proves that covering the face with hands is not an antidote for removing shyness. Often, when people are shy or shamed, they cast their faces down and even cover it with their hands.

4.2. Expressing *complete cover* in Ewe, using ‘xe’ [xé]

The expression using **xe** as a verb signifies obstructing or blocking something from being seen. When a view is obstructed or some things cover surfaces like windows, doors, entrances and others, **xe** is used. Usually, the obstructing object is large enough to cover the referent (object). For instance, Figure 2 shows the different forms of covering, with Picture D indicating how the open window is covered with black polythene. Picture E shows how the curtain covers the louvre blades or slide windows, while Picture F illustrates how the drummer covers the one carrying the drum, as well as how the procession of the 2023 Department of Ewe Cultural Troupe covers those under the tent from being seen. In these descriptions, **xe** is used to express a cover form.

Figure 2: Forms of covering using **xe**



(Source: IMPIX Midea, 2023)

- (9) **Dútsú lá xé fésrē lá .** (Picture D)
 man DET cover window DET
 ‘The man covered/sealed the window.’

- (10) **Fésrēñv̄ō lá xé fésrē lá ñú.** (Picture E)
 window.curtain DET cover window DET exterior surface
 ‘The curtain covers the mouth of the window.’

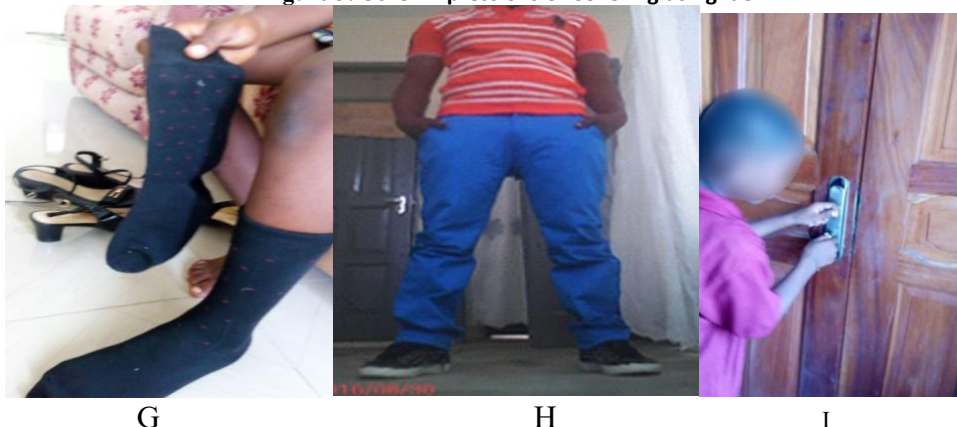
- (11) **Uǎfólá-wo xé anyínólá-wó fé mǎ.** (Picture F)
 drummer-PL cover spectator-PL POSS face
 ‘The drummers blocked the views of those who were seated.’

In other contexts, *xe* is used metaphorically to mean to accompany or escort someone. The expression *Xe vume na ame* means ‘to accompany’ or ‘to escort’ someone to a place.

4.3. Expressing partial cover in Ewe; using ‘do’ [dó] to show covering a part of a body.

This is the most common concept expressed in a variety of ways. Pictures G, H, and I show some of these ways of expressing cover.

Figure 3: Other Expressions of Covering using ‘do’



(Source: IMPIX Midea, 2023)

The use of do [dó] to express wear is explained as follows.

- (12) a. **Àmè lá dó àf̄wũĩ**
 Person DET wear socks
 ‘The person wears a pair of socks’.
- b. **Jerry dó àwũ, àvéte´ kplě àf̄kpa**
 Jerry wear.shirt trousers CONJ footwear
 ‘Jerry wears a shirt, a pair of trousers, and a footwear.’

In example (12), covering is about shielding in a particular manner using a material in a defined and designed form or style. It is to cover defined parts of the body: the trunk of the body, feet, and hands. Additionally, the nature of the material must be hollow so that the body part can be shod into it. When one examines the nature of shirts and pairs of trousers or shorts, they have more than one opening and the body is often shod into them. A pair of socks and gloves have only one opening, just like hats and caps, but because socks are worn on the feet and gloves on the hands, they also use the verb **do** to depict a form or way of covering a body part with

them. A different verb, **ɔ** [ɔ́], elicits the wearing of hat and caps, and could be designated to body part relevance and its usage in the culture and the linguistics of the people. We can say the covering phenomenon expressed on socks and gloves go with to-clothe which is clothing or wear verb. Metaphorically, 'do' is used to express anger in expressions like **do dziku** meaning 'get angry' or to literally mean one plants or wears anger. Also, **ta menɔa agbe klo ɔɔa kuku o** – the head cannot be alive and the knee wears hat/cap. This metaphorical expression or cover confirm the relevance of body parts and the material used in the coverage and the elicitation of their covering relation as enshrined by the language or culture of the people.

4.4. Express covering the trunk region of a body, using 'ta' [tà]

The concept of covering the trunk or lower part of a body in a standing position fully with cloth attracts the word **ta**. It is about wrapping the lower part of a body or the trunk portion around with a cloth. This concept is gender specific in Ewe. It is used for females only, as shown by the clothing forms in Pictures J and K, the way the women wrap the cloth around themselves shows the concept of **ta** which is to wear or to cover one's body trunk by wrapping the cloth around it.

(13) **Ámá tà àvɔ̄.**

Ama cover cloth

'Ama 'cover at trunk region' cloth/Ama wears/wraps cloth.'

Figure 4: Expressing cover from the trunk to the heels of the body



J

K

(Source: IMPIX Midea,2023)

4.5. Express covering, using 'da' [dà] and 'gba' [gbá]

Covering forms elicited by the words '**da**' and **gba** are those that show a manner of wearing cloth from the shoulder across the trunk of the body to the heels of the feet and the rest is hung on one of the shoulders; usually the left shoulder. The expression often literally reads, *Put a cloth on the shoulder*. It is only cloth that is used to cover the body in that manner. The manner of covering the body with cloth elicits the term as shown in Figure 5 and the males in Pictures L and O portray the use of the verb **da** to show covering this form. However, the use of **gba** as a verb to show covering is shown in Pictures M, N and O. Picture P shows the use of **da** by the man to portray the elicitation of the manner of 'to cover' with a cloth and the lady shows the use of **gba** as a verb to express a form of covering. Even though picture O portrays the use of two different forms of covering with a cloth, both pictures depict **gba** as opposed to how Pictures J and K express it. We can also posit that the use of **da** often goes with males and some female royals' way of dressing or wearing clothes. This depicts that **da** goes with a masculine expression of wearing or covering with cloth in a manner (Picture L. M) as against **ta** (Picture J, K) and **gba**, which fully express feminine or females' way of covering their bodies in a manner using cloth pieces (Picture N). Also, when one lies down and fully covers the body from head to toe, **gba** is sometimes used to describe that way of covering.

Figure 4: Shoulder to the trunk and feet or below the knee covering



L

M

N

O

(Source: IMPIX Midea,2023)

Using the verb **da** [dà] in (14a) illustrates that Kofi wears the cloth across the shoulders, through the trunk to the feet. It will, therefore, be ungrammatical and semantically a tautology to express the same notion using the verb **ta** as shown (14b); hence, 'da' should also be used in (14b).

- (14) a. Kòfí **dà** áv̄ ðé àb̄.
 Kofi cover cloth at shoulder
 'Kofi put on a cover cloth.'
- b. *Kwésí **tà** àv̄ ðé àb̄.
 Kwesi cover cloth at shoulder
 Intended: 'Kwesi 'cover at trunk region' cloth/Ama wears/wraps cloth.'
- (15) Rebecca **gbá** àv̄.
 Rebecca cover cloth
 'Rebecca covered (the upper part of the body) with a cloth.'

The verb **gba** is used to express the concept of full covering of the upper part of a body. **Gba** also represents the concept of 'to roof' as in (16), to cover the chest portion as in the case of the females in Figure 5, Pictures L and N, respectively. Culturally, the feminine senses surrounding the use of **gba** in referring to females covering the upper parts of their bodies; a little above the breast down the trunk to the knees. Also, using the same verb **gba**, to mean, 'to roof', can be metaphorically interpreted as females being the cover or roof for men. This agrees with the philosophical or metaphorical sayings in Ewe that women are 'crowns/shades/tents for men or women are the glory and hidden places for men, among others - **Nyɔnuwoe nye fiakuku, agbadɔ, bebefe na ɔtsuwo, nyɔnuwoe doa kɔkɔ ɔtsuwo**, among others. That spectacle of interpretation as crowns, roofs or shades is culturally, very significant to native speakers regarding the use of **gba** in the context under discussion hence women are adored among Ewe people.

- (16) a. **Gbá** x̄.
 cover building
 'to roof a building.'
- b. **Gbá** àkó.
 cover chest
 'to cover the chest'

The expression in (16b) is about wearing a cloth to cover one's body from the breasts or chest down; especially for females. In some dialects of Ewe, such as among Ewedome and Tongu people, 'gba' or 'gba avo' is used interchangeably with 'da avo de abo'.

4.6. Expressing full covering regarding a specific body part, usually the head using 'ɖɔ' [ɖɔ] and 'bla'[blá]

Covering only the head using **ɖɔ** is only associated with hats, caps which are used to cover the head, or wearing hats, and caps. 'Bla, on the other hand, refers to using a scarf to cover the head in a given manner with a material in a given form or style. Both men and women do cover their heads but the instrument used and the manner of covering depict the word to use to express the manner of covering; thus hat, cap, scarf or pieces of cloth invites **ɖɔ** or **bla**. 'Bla' [blá] in Ewe means to "tie". It is similar to **sa** but that goes with tying or knotting the same material. Fig 7, explains the use of **sa** as a clothing/covering term. 'Bla' references using a material to tie something.

Wearing a scarf is expressed as 'to tie' the head 'bla ta' or 'bla taku' tie with a scarf or headgear, The instrument could be mentioned or not. When someone says 'bla ta' in Ewe, native speakers' minds go to scarf first; to tie or knot it at the back or front of the head. Since hat is hollow and we shod it on the head, the act or manner of wearing hats or hollow objects on the head invites the use of **ɖɔ** and **bla** when scarf and a piece of cloth is used to tie the head. Figure 6 presents pictures portraying the use of 'ɖɔ' and **bla**, respectively.

Figure 5: Covering of the head region



(Source: IMPIX Midea,2023)

Regarding the case of females wearing a scarf or headgear, (see Picture P, supported by Pictures, K, L, N).

We can say;

- (17) **Ámá blá tǎ**
 Ama tie head
 'Ama ties head (headgear/scarf)'

Ama bla ta. Here a scarf or headgear is not mentioned (17) but has the same meaning as 'Ama wears or ties scarf, in (18a) or (18b);

- (18) a. **Ámá blá tǎ kplě tǎkǔ.**
 Ama tie head with scarf
 'Ama ties her head with a scarf' '
 b. **Ámá blá tǎkǔ.**
 Ama tie scarf
 'Ama wears a scarf'.

- (19) **Yàò dǎ kúkú.**
 Yao wear hat/cap
 'Yao wears a hat or cap.'

The use of “**dǎ**” [**dǎ**], goes with wearing hat, cap, and a pair of spectacles. Assuming one wears a pair of socks over the head, it can be expressed using **dǎ** but when worn on the feet, **dò** is used in expressing the same material (socks) worn at different parts of the body. We can say the materials involved, part of the objects covered and the manner of covering generates the term to use. Additionally, **dǎ** [**dǎ**] is also used to refer to a fluid covering a surface. For instance, flood or when water covers a surface, usually a large surface, it is said as **tsi dǎ**, meaning ‘water has covered’ or has flooded a surface. On the part of **bla**, it is used metaphorically in the expressions like **Wobla dǎ enju** to mean ‘to gang up against someone or to plan to harm or kill someone secretly’.

4.7. Expressing cover-using ‘sa’ [sà] (to tie)

Expressions involving **sa** depict covering a human body part with cloth, focusing on knotting the cloth at a given part of the body. Pictures S and T show forms of covering elicited using **sa**.

Figure 6: Covering and knotting using ‘sa’



(Source: IMPIX Midea,2023)

- (20) a. **Yàò sà àvǎ dé àlì.** (Picture S)
 Yao cover.tie cloth at waist
 'Yao ties cloth at/around the waist.'
 This means the cloth is worn and knotted around the waist.
- b. **Agnes sà àvǎ dé kò.** (Picture T)
 Agnes cover.tie cloth at neck
 'Agnes ties cloth at/ around the neck.'

Pictures (S and T): the cloth is worn and knotted around the waist, and the cloth is worn and knotted around the neck both use the verb **sa**. The elicitation of the covering form, focuses on the knotting but more on the part of the body where the knot is found in the covering. The data in (20) indicates that **sa** can be used in cases where a knot accompanies the covering of the body part. Though it indicates covering

and knotting; all the time, the usage of **sa** [sà] around the waist region other than other parts of the body seems to be gender sensitive in Ewe. Using **sa** on clothing and knotting the waist mainly depicts men’s way of wearing/tying a cloth around the waist, whilst in the case of women wearing/tying a cloth around the waist, **tà** is used. But both men and women can use **sa** if the knotting is behind the neck (see fig. 7).

The variability occurs only when other body parts are involved in the cover and the knot phenomenon. In that regard, using a male name Kodzo in (20a) is culturally appropriate, and should a female name be used, the cultural understanding could be problematic though grammatically or semantically correct. In the case of (20b) either male or female can be used.

4.8. Expressing full covering using “xátsá”[xátsá] (to wrap/to envelop)

‘**Xatsa**’ expresses the act of covering by wrapping a material around an object. The act is such that the object is entirely enveloped in the wrapper. In Ewe culture, some food items and other things are wrapped. Expressing ‘to wrap’ which is **xatsa**; is often used interchangeably with **bla** Figure 8 shows a picture of a wrapped kenkey.

Figure 7: Cover as in Wrapping kenkey



U

4.9. Expressing full covering using “tu” [tú] (to close)

The word **tu** is used to express the act of covering using a lid. How a lid is placed on objects or how a lid is used to cover an opening is expressed using **tu**. The expression covers the closing of doors, windows, bottles, flasks, bowls, etc. Pictures V and W of Figure 9 show such forms of covering involving the use of **tu**. The examples in (23) demonstrate the two scenarios. It can be clarified that in the cases of Picture W, and example (21b), the verb **do** can be used. This occurs in some dialects of Ewe, especially, Ave and Avenor, where **tu** and **do** are used interchangeably to mean to lock or to close a door.

Figure 8: Covering a bowl, closing a door



V



W

(Source: IMPIX Midea,2023).

- (21) a. **È tú àgbà lá é nū.**
 3SG cover plate/bow DET 3SG mouth
 ‘S/he has covered it/ S/he has covered its mouth.’
- b. **É tú uṣtrú lá.**
 3SG cover door DET
 ‘S/he closed the door.’

4.10. Expressing full covering using “tre”[tré] (to seal).

To cover’ an opening or a hole with a sticky material such as glue, clay, rubber, sticky pads, etc; use ‘tre’ to express it. In sealing any perforated object and how Atakpame or swish/clay walls are put up, ‘tre’ is used to describe it.

4.11. Expressing full covering using “si” [sì] (to smear or to paint).

Covering surfaces by smearing a creamy or gelatinous material is expressed using **si**. We use **si** when painting surfaces, applying powder, a cream, or smearing something on surfaces. In some dialects of Ewe, such as Ewedome and Tongu, smearing oneself with powder is elicited with **dza** and **gba**. So, one can hear expressions like – ‘**dza pɔɔa, gba pɔɔa, or si pɔɔa**’ to mean smear powder on one’s body. Some dialects like the Avenor people do duplicate the verb **si** to become **sisi** and use it to mean the same as ‘to smear’ **si**. This is against the assertions of Amegashie (2008) that considering the principles and rules of writing, the Ewe verb duplications resulted in nouns; however, dimorphic verbs exist in Ewe. We can say, only in sentences or contexts can such situations be justified.

4.12. Expressing full covering using “nyrɔ” [nrɔ] (to sink or to immerse in a fluid)

Covering by immersing an object in a fluid is elicited using the word **nyrɔ**. In this context, it informs about how the object will be covered/soaked with water, oil, or any fluid. It is observed from the analysis and interpretations that the concept of covering and its nature is in the style or manner of wearing, the part of the body involved, the kind and nature of the material involved, or the degree or extent of the coverage being expressed is seriously considered. **Uua ‘nyrɔ’** - the car sinks/sunk but metaphorically, it means, one is defeated, impotent (can’t have an erection) or even dead. For instance, **Efe agbevuua nyrɔ** means ‘his life boat/car sinks or has sunk’, meaning, one is dead, suffers erectile dysfunction or is dead.

5. Conclusion

This paper investigates expressions associated with the concept of covering. It posits that identifiable activities portraying cover concerning the elements involved, their given properties, positions, proximity, orientations toward each other, and the defined contexts being considered. The study establishes that covering can be expressed in various ways in Ewe. The verbs or words used to mark it according to some implied processes and features are for a purpose, for meaning to be derived.

The study finds that covering terms are elicited based on the nature of objects involved, the nature and properties of materials involved, the manner of the covering, the contexts in which each covering situation occurs, and the degree of the coverage. It is also found that each term is context-based and fixed to a particular description. The description explains the nature of the covering – partly or in whole, the part of the body of an object being covered and the materials involved in the covering. Covering is employed in man’s everyday activities, including agriculture, clothing, etc.

The study also discovers that the cover concept can be expressed metaphorically and in other extended forms in Ewe. Some terms can be used interchangeably among some dialect groups of Ewe. The study recommends that future researchers work on

some semantic senses and relations governing cover terms as well as syntactic issues in Ewe.

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